

WHITECOURT TRAILBLAZERS

»» HISTORY OF EVENTS 1979 - PRESENT

The information provided illustrates club activities and history. This information is believed to be correct, but years and dates may vary.

» 1979 - 1984

- the club began organizational meetings in the winter of 1979- 1980, with the first recorded minutes dated November 1981.
- elections are held yearly to elect executive and directors as written in the bylaws of the club
- club supper meetings are usually held every 3rd Wednesday of each month from October to May at a pre-determined location. Executive meetings are held as determined by the president
- The Town of Whitecourt and the Trailblazers developed and approved the first ATV bylaw in 1981-82
- The Trailblazers were affiliated with the Alberta Snowmobile Association in 1981
- Alberta Forest Service developed Eagle River Recreation area - 83 km of recreation trails with facilities in 1982
- Carson Lake Provincial Park allows snowmobilers in to the park via the Eagle River Trail system link - 1983
- Trailblazers were given ownership of a trapper's cabin near Whitecourt Mountain in 1983
- The Trailblazers won the ASA Club of the Year award in 1983
- John Pisarski stopped in Whitecourt at G&R Outdoor Recreation Centre Sports on way to NWT from St. Bruno, QUE in 1983
- Club purchased trailer and sound system to be used by any community organization in 1984, free of charge
- Trailblazers held their first jamboree in 1984

> 1985 - 1990

- Whitecourt was recognized as Snowmobile Capital of Alberta 1985-86 – advertising on local transport trucks and on entrance sign to town – grant was received from Travel Alberta
- Forty-three local Trailblazer and ASA members rode from Red Deer to Silver Star Ski Hill at Vernon, B.C. to pick up traveling trophy – 1985-86
- Trailblazers Club was awarded Ski-doo New Generation National Club of Canada from Bombardier in 1985-86. A snowmobile was the grand prize which the club raffled off – a local resident won the machine.
- Received letter from the Town of Whitecourt Recreation Director indicating grant funding could be available to the club – 1985
- Town of Whitecourt Chamber of Commerce and Trailblazers began manning tourism display booth at trade shows, displaying the great recreational and tourism potential in the area – 1985
- First emergency response sled was donated to the club in 1986 – present unit was purchased in 1992, which is stored at the local RCMP station for use
- Scholarship program for students from Whitecourt who were going on to post secondary education was initiated in 1986
- Club set up program to yearly recognize continuous members with 5 and 8 year pins, a framed club pin for 10, 15 and 20 years
- Applied for and received approval of incorporation under the Societies Act of Alberta – 1986 - #254268
- The club hosted the NWSA ice drags and oval races at Shrum's Lake in 1986-87
- In 1986 membership reached a club high of 127 families - 337 individuals and 218 sleds
- Cabin (near Whitecourt Mountain) which was given to the club in 1983, was burned down in 1987
- The club received a Certificate of Appreciation award from the Canadian Red Cross for support of the blood donor clinic
- Members of Trailblazers used club rescue sleigh and ATV to bring individual out of rough area south of town with severely broken leg in 1987. The ASA and club recognized their efforts with a plaque and trophy
- Trailblazers held their second ASA jamboree in 1989

- Golden Triangle consortium was formed and trail location and development began – 1989
- Trailblazers acknowledge business and companies for their contribution and support to the club with awarding of a yearly appreciation certificate beginning in 1990

➤ 1991 - 1995

- Local club member, Glen Kingdon, received plaque for being voted snowmobiler of the year for Canada – 1992
- Trailblazer members assisted in hosting the Yellowhead Winter Festival - 1992
- Trailblazers took over operation of the Eagle River Recreation trail system from the Alberta Forest Service – 1993
- Trailblazers investigated the purchase of the forestry groomer – 1993
- Club and member insurance could now be obtained from the ASA for a yearly fee – 1993
- Rocky Mountain Tours took 28 Trailblazer members to West Yellowstone Montana in March 1993
- Negotiations with the federal government on First Nations land for reserve and recreation trail relocation began in 1993-94 with present day location being negotiated
- The Golden Triangle Recreation Trail System between the communities of Fox Creek, Swan Hills and Whitecourt was completed with directions, location maps and signage completed. Official opening of the 354 km system was November 1994. Whitecourt Trailblazers maintain 188 km of the system.

➤ 1996 - 2000

- The club hosted Race Line Super Trax Sports Magazine with regards to the popularity of the area for recreation and snowmobiling capital of Alberta-1995-96
- Rallies were held on the Golden Triangle in 1995, 1996 and 1997
- Trailblazers began annual trail grooming on an hourly basis in 1996
- Construction of a warm-up survival shelter was completed and bathrooms were placed at the start of the Golden Triangle trail and other locations - 1996

- Trailblazer members received a plaque and recognition from Bombardier for locating lost local resident - December 29, 1996
- Whitecourt to Silver Summit Recreation trail system was completed in 1998-99, of which the club maintains 72 km
- The complete trail infrastructure maintained by the club is all mapped, gazetted and GPS'd with the appropriate local authorities – maps can be purchased at local businesses and Chamber of Commerce
- Continuous on-going consultation and cooperation with forestry, energy exploration and development resource companies to allow all to utilize the crown lands to its fullest
- Rendezvous 1998 ride was in Whitecourt on February 4th with 16 core riders starting in Eastern Canada and ending in the interior of B.C. The ride followed the present day TransCanada Snowmobile Trail
- A seasonal ATV bylaw was approved by Town Council in February 1999
- Trailblazers assisted the Town of Whitecourt with development of a 13 km year-round multi-use trail network from residential areas to exit on to all major trail connectors – 1999
- Trailblazers held their third ASA jamboree in 2000
- The four snowmobile manufacturers have show-cased their new products promoting this area for tourism in 1984, 1993 and 2000

➤ 2001 - 2005

- Whitecourt area has received the Rider's Choice awards of gold, silver and bronze for favorite family riding area and favorite overall snowmobiling area in Alberta from 1999 to 2003
- Three "over 50 chicks" from Massachusetts and Pennsylvania rode from Merritt B.C. to Pearce Rock QU, stopping in Whitecourt for lunch on February 6, 2002 – a total of 6000 km taking a total of 22 days
- The Trailblazers hosted their first avalanche awareness and training program in Whitecourt and Valemont, B.C. in January 2003
- W.O.W. ride to raise funds for breast cancer research began in St. Johns NFL, stopping in Whitecourt for banquet, socializing and presentations on February 21, 2003, continuing on to finish in Squamish, B.C. The route followed the newly opened TransCanada Snowmobile Trail System. A total of \$123,000 was raised for cancer research, \$3,200 of this in Alberta.

- The Trailblazer's Club has made a motion to investigate the possibility of raising funds to purchase a grooming unit at its April 16, 2003 meeting. Club executive met on April 26, 2003 with MLA George VanderBurg to explore any provincial grants that may be available for this purchase. Letters of statements of opinion have been received from the Town of Whitecourt and Woodlands County with regards to support of this proposal. On April 28, 2003, verbal approval of a CIP grant was given by George VanderBurg. Discussion regarding development and promotion of tourism with the Town, County and Chamber of Commerce has been on-going. Fundraising for the matching grant begun by May 26, 2003. Members went to Bombardier in Calgary to inspect used snowcats on June 4, 2003 – tentative agreement on a unit was indicated. A motion was passed at special meeting on July 2nd to proceed with the purchase, delivered price for complete unit to be in the \$80,000 range. Fund raising special meetings were held by executive members from July 2nd to August 13th to evaluate donation levels. Matching grant application was sent to CIP on July 9th. Meetings with the Town of Whitecourt, County of Woodlands ongoing as to progress with donations, etc. An invoice was received from 797732 Alberta Ltd. on July 3rd for a used, reconditioned 1995 BR400mp Bombardier snowcat, totaling \$57,245. A 10% deposit was sent by the Town of Whitecourt on July 4th – balance was paid on September 5th. Trailblazers applied for and received a tax exemption number to allow for the use of purple diesel in grooming unit – accounts were set up at local dealers. Club executive and members met with MLA George and lotteries minister on July 14th to review progress and status of purchase of trail grooming equipment – discussed donation drive, community, local and government involvement. Update of latest club operational proposal and other data given to MLA and Lotteries Minister. Sales agreement was received from Bombardier on July 22nd totaling \$22,461.83, for Mogal Master MPB18-10 drag. A cheque was sent by the Town of Whitecourt for \$2,246.18, with the balance to be paid on delivery date. A meeting was held with the County of Woodlands July 28th to discuss their involvement and contribution towards the project.
- Trailblazers met with Town of Whitecourt and Millar Western representatives on May 12, 2003 to investigate the possibility of extending the Flats Road trail south to the upside of the pulp mill effluent discharge, to eliminate the open water problem in winter.
- On August 6th the Trailblazer Club was successful in a draw for a 16 x 24 ft. cabin which was donated by ANC. This will be located on our trail system.
- Meeting with Millar Western re effluent discharge and possible solution
- Final payments were made on Sno.Cat and Mogul Master groomer September 3rd, and November 17th respectively.
- CNR to install recreation trail crossing east of Dahl Drive
- Groomer arrived 12 noon on November 19, 2003 and set-up took until 5:30 p.m.
- Donated fuel tank and stand was set up in town yard and filled with fuel November 25, 2003 – spill containment surround was included
- Groomer was entered in the Santa Claus Light-up Parade also on November 28th and transported by Rozsko Farm Equipment from Mayerthorpe – the unit was also showcased in the IGA parking lot November 29th during a membership drive

- Groomer donor board is placed at participating businesses on a weekly basis. There have been a total of 52 donators to date – December 31, 2003
- Grooming started on town recreation trail system on December 19, 2003, as a trial run with trail grooming beginning January 14, 2004
- Our snowmobile rally is always held on February family day weekend to raise funds for club activities and expenditure – a record of 1256 hands in two days were sold in 2004
- WOW Ride for Breast Cancer Research was in Whitecourt on February 3 & 4, 2004 on their way to Rosseau Minnesota. A fun ride and evening was had by all. An estimated \$4000 was raised.
- Craig Nicholson Tour (SnowWest Magazine) arrived in town February 4, 2004, leaving February 6th. He was impressed with the trail system, hospitality and community in general.
- Annual Poker Rally February 14th-15th with 1256 hands sold. More than 300 snowmobilers attended the two day event.
- Membership for the 2003 - 2004 season is 192 – a club record.
- A total of 180 hours of trail grooming was performed in the 2003 - 2004 season. Trails are smooth and hard-packed for season ending March 9th due to warm weather.
- Night Club members rode to Edson ski hill for lunch; great spring ride March 2004
- Club members cleaned new growth and widened more than 60 km of trails thanks to the donation of equipment of Progressive Logging April of 2004
- Club member moved existing warmup shelter from the Athabasca loop near Carson Lake to Whitecourt, which will be set up on Groat Creek Road Trail later. New Material for the log cabin was taken to the site at the same time April of 2004.
- Trailblazer club members and Town of Whitecourt employees attended a Bombardier technical service and maintenance school in Calgary in April of 2004.
- A motion was made to set up an equipment replacement and maintenance reserve on April 21st, 2004.
- Numerous meetings will be held throughout the year with Trailblazers club, the Town of Whitecourt, the County of Woodlands, and the Chamber of Commerce regarding the feasibility of the snowmobile icon project.
- The Trailblazers club and members were recognized by the ASA for their efforts to the sport of snowmobiling at the annual fall banquet awards.
 - **Dale Gunderson** – ASA Alberta Outstanding Snowmobiler for 2004
 - **Elaine Gunderson** – ASA Star Award for her support of Dale's dedication to the ASA and the Trailblazers.
 - **Whitecourt Trailblazers** – ASA Northwest Region Outstanding Snowmobile Club for 2004.
 - **Whitecourt Trailblazers** – ASA Outstanding Snowmobile Club for Alberta 2004

- **MLA George Vanderburg** – ASA Recognition Award for his support of Organized Snowmobiling in Alberta
- Trailblazer Club received congratulatory certificate from the Whitecourt Chamber of Commerce for Winning the ASA Club of the Year award for 2004.
- Members of the club are participating in the development of Millar Western's 10 Year detailed forestry management plan (September of 2004).
- The annual scholarship was awarded to Jason Petrinchuk for 2004.
- Set up and finishing of the new log cabin began during the summer with more than 650 volunteer hours to complete the building by October of 2004.
- The Whitecourt snowmobiling area has received Rider Choice awards for 2003 and 2004: (1) Gold for favourite overall snowmobiling area in Alberta, (2) Silver for favourite family area, (3) Bronze for favourite groomed trail riding , and (4) Honourable Mention as most popular area in the West.
- Existing Warm-Up shelter was moved and set up complete with wood shed and bathroom onto Groat Creek Road Trail November of 2004.
- Annual fall trail cleaning began November 11th with 970 volunteer hours to complete some 330 KM of trail system
- More improvements to the trail system were done this fall in numerous areas. All equipment and operators were donated to the club by Bob's Cat Service and Mc Ritchie's Forestry Service.
- Millar Western has nearly achieved their goal of controlling the process water into the McLeod River, allowing it to freeze providing access for lower valley snowmobilers to the Eagle River Trail System (December of 2004).

Annual snowmobile rally attracted nearly 700 sledders and 1900 hands were purchased for the 2005 2 day family event. The \$20,000 hidden hand was not won. The Trailblazers celebrated their 25th anniversary as well.

- Club membership reached 204 for the 2004-2005 year
- A total of 133 volunteer hours were spent grooming our trail system
- The Whitecourt area has been recognized by SnowRiders Choice Awards for the 2004-2005 season:
 - Platinum - favourite groomed trail riding
 - Platinum – favourite area for family snowmobiling
 - Gold – favourite overall snowmobiling in Alberta
 - Silver – most popular area in the west
- Groat Creek cabin was refurbished with manufactured log siding material August 25, 2005.
- 2005 annual recipient of the Trailblazer's Scholarship was Maria Verreault

- Snowmobile Capital designation has been officially registered by the Town of Whitecourt and the Trailblazers Club have exclusive rights to its promotional use – December 2005.
- Jason Karst was winner of the membership drive draw at the December 2005 meeting
- A total of 473 volunteer hours were spent on the annual trail maintenance, as well as in excess of 100 hours and some 56 miles of hydro axing by MacRitchie Forestry Services – fall 2005
- Trailblazers have been granted permission to fund raise through Alberta Gaming (casinos)

➤ 2006 - 2010

- Some 71 participants took part in the avalanche training and survival course in Valemont, B.C. – January 2006.
- The club executive revisited the club by-laws to update and make changes to accommodate present day functions – January 2006
- Club membership reached 160 members as of February 15, 2006; amazing for no snow conditions
- Annual family day poker rally for February 18 – 19, 2006 was cancelled due to lack of snow – only 2 inches.
- Banquet was held February 25, 2006 for traveling WOW (Way Out Women Ride for Breast Cancer Research) riders and guests with municipal and government dignitaries attending. \$5,732 was raised locally - 20 sledders in all participated.
- Local trail system was opened for use for March 3, 2006, still only in fair condition with about 6-8 inches of fluffy snow.
- The Partnership Group of the Town of Whitecourt and Woodlands County have approved the 5-year club operational proposal.
- Trails closed for the season on March 20, 2006.
- Spring Wine & Cheese Wind-up was held April 19, 2006 – it was well attended.
- The 2006 annual scholarship of \$500 went to Krista Walt.

- Friday, August 18, 2006 some Trailblazer members met with representatives of Blue Ridge Lumber and were presented with a 14 x 20 manufactured log cabin to be used as a warm-up shelter on the trails.

- A meeting was held on August 22, 2006 with Millar Western Forest Products to determine a site location in their FMA for this cabin. It will be situated on the TransCanada Trail/Golden Triangle Trail east of the Virginia Hills road.
- The Town of Whitecourt and Woodlands County received awards for tourism promotion and development of snowmobiling
- A total of 738 volunteer hours were required for trail maintenance in 2006. Equipment and labour is valued at \$39,948.00.
- The Trailblazers won a trophy for outstanding service club in the Christmas Light-up parade
- Trail grooming began December 14, 2006.
- Winner of membership drive was Stirling McLaughlin
- A tragic accident claimed the life of long-time member and trail boss Dale Gunderson on January 14, 2007.
- Local media and dignitaries took part in a ride to the Carson Lake Cabin the afternoon of February 7, 2007, with 29 participants taking part
- Our annual snowmobile rally attracted nearly 900 sledders with 2380 hands being bought over the 2-day Family Day event. The hidden hand was not won.
- A club high of 341 trail passes were sold for the 2006-2007 season.
- A ton of snow accumulated in the 2006-2007 season, measuring close to 200cm or 6 feet.
- Trail groomer was serviced and put in storage with 208 operating hours for the winter.
- The Town of Whitecourt equipment technician and Trailblazer member attended the Bombardier/Prinoth maintenance seminar in Calgary
- The Eagle River Group Camp is booked from May 5, 2007 through to the October long weekend.
- The Town of Whitecourt and Woodlands County were selected for the Excellence Award by the Canadian Council of Snowmobile Organizations (CCSSO) in Minneapolis, Minnesota for Outstanding Snowmobile Tourism Promotion and Development – they accepted the award at the ASA's fall awards banquet.
- Elaine Gunderson accepted the Louise Sherren Lifetime Achievement Award posthumously for Dale at the ASA Awards Banquet. Also recognized was Alex Manweiler for Groomer of the Year and Karen Manweiler for her support.
- A total of \$40,000 of trail brush clearing was done in the spring of 2007 – a portion of the cost was a donation by the contractor.
- The Virginia Hills cabin location was completed with woodshed, bathroom and kiosk in memory of Dale Gunderson. The location will be known as the Gundy Rest Site.

- Whitecourt Trailblazers were one of three finalists in the Alto Tourism Awards held at the Banff Springs Hotel in October 2007.
- Whitecourt recreation trail systems were officially opened December 8, 2007 with 25 cm of snow falling during the week.
- The trail system was officially closed February 27/08 due to warm temperatures and resulting trail conditions
- Trailblazers have been awarded the 2009 ASA jamboree
- Brenda Merrifield was the winner of the Yamaha sled at the 2008 snowmobile rally
- Brad Guenette received the ASA Award of Excellence Youth Award for his contributions to the Club
- Groomer was retrofitted with a branch cutter and fuel tank with an electric pump. The unit accumulated 166 hours in the past season of grooming. Major renovations and improvements were donated at the Eagle River Recreation Area by S.R.D. and the Trailblazers.
- Deanna Astill was the recipient of the 2008 Trailblazers scholarship
- Snowmobile Rally/Sled Invasion set an all-time record for sleds (900) attendance and hands purchased (3182). 2009 Arctic Cat sled was won by T.J. Benoit of Edmonton. Weekend in general was beyond expectations with an estimated economic impact of \$4.5 to \$5 million spent locally. A record back-flip was achieved by Sam Rogers of 119 feet on a Polaris sled.
- 2008-2009 memberships and trail passes totaled 304
- 3D Seismic Program is active north and west of the Eagle River Recreation area.
- Trailblazers Club has won a 2009 SkiDoo 800 154XP mountain sled and \$1500 for largest membership for the province.
- Training of three new groomer operators was ongoing during 2008-2009. A busy winter with 288 hours on SnoCat
- Awards won this year was bronze for favorite powder riding, bronze for favorite family riding, gold for overall snowmobiling in Alberta and gold for best groomed trails
- Major upgrades and expansion at Eagle River Recreation area for tourism use both summer and winter; combination effort by the Trailblazers, Woodlands County, SRD and local contractors and businesses – in excess of \$28,000
- Recipient of 2009 Trailblazer scholarship was Carissa Johnson
- Trail cleaning fall of 2009 – 490 volunteer hours – 45 trucks, 30 trailers, 57 ATV's and 47 power saws
- NTC funding was received from the federal and provincial governments and ASA for trail development in the amount of \$428,000

- The Trailblazers were nominated for an Alberta Tourism Alta award, and were among the finalists
- The Trailblazers were awarded the ASA Outstanding Club of the Year, Northwest Region Club of the year and Outstanding Tourism Promotion & Development for 2009
- President Ken Linford and Vice President Dan Guenette were awarded Citizens of the Year by the Whitecourt Chamber of Commerce
- The Town of Whitecourt and The Trailblazers constructed a 50 x 40 foot storage building to house the groomer etc., at a cost of \$30,000
- The Trailblazers purchased a 2150 litre twin-walled fuel storage tank, equipped with electric pump, etc. to fuel up the SnoCat
- The annual media ride was a huge success, with 74 riders, held February 3, 2010
- Our annual family poker rally was cancelled due to lack of snow for 2010 – approximately 10 inches this year
- Sled raffle for 2010 of Skidoo 800 154XP was won by Mark Pederson of Whitecourt. There were 5549 tickets sold
- There were 278 trail passes sold in 2010, despite the lack of snow.
- All trail improvements and new trail development were completed by March 31, 2010. Signage will be completed when frost conditions permit. There were 98.5 km of new trails and 28.6 km of upgraded and relocated trails done, making our system a total of 420 km. Three points of interest will be established with bathrooms, table and fire pits on the Groat Canyon Trail, Goodwin Lake and the Athabasca River Lookout north of Whitecourt. The Trailblazers and SRD are presently completing the total trail system with GPS locations and will have CNT notation when complete
- An avalanche survival course was held in January 8th and 9th, 2010
- A mere 70 hours of trail grooming took place in winter of 2009-2010, due to lack of snow
- Our grooming unit has 1029 hours of operation since the purchase in 2003, grooming some 8,278 km of trails. The unit has been serviced and parked in shed.
- A general meeting and wind-up for 2009-10 was held on April 21/10 with contractors and supporting businesses in attendance
- The Eagle River Recreation Area is booked every weekend through to October, plus some weekdays as well
- Four bathroom units were donated to the Trailblazers from the Whitecourt Lion's Club – they have been refurbished and placed at three look-out points
- Members of the Trailblazers were guests of Woodlands County to view their points of interest from Whitecourt to Fort Assiniboine to promote tourism within the county on May 26/10
- The 2010 Trailblazer's Scholarship was awarded to Emily Shand

- Signing of the newly developed trails is slated for completion this fall
- Meetings have been ongoing to restart the Golden Triangle as a destination for snowmobiling – all the communities and Woodlands County are involved
- The JED booth at the ASA fall trade show in Edmonton on Oct. 22/23/24 was selling raffle tickets on a 2011 Polaris Pro 800 155" sled
- Whitecourt Trailblazers were presented with the CCSO Promotion & Development of Tourism Award for 2010
- Trailblazers will be working at the St. Albert Casino on Dec. 13th 7 14th
- Preparation for the upcoming season has begun with trail cleaning, cabin maintenance etc.

»» Trailblazer's Family Activities and Fund Raising Events

- snowmobile ticket raffles
- snowmobile rides to raise funds for disabled
- provided security for annual Whitecourt trade fair
- operated concessions for Riverboat Association world champion races
- assisted cross country ski club fund raising and sound system trailer
- club annual grass and snow drags began in 1982
- mud bogs were held for a few seasons at rodeo grounds
- organized and assisted with winter festival activities at old ski hill in 1982
- held a cross country snowmobile derby as a club function at rodeo grounds
- hosted Yellowhead winter festival in 1992
- club has hosted numerous spring and fall ASA meetings
- hosted and promoted snowmobile safety and awareness seminars
- host annual snowmobile rally on family day weekend as major fund raising event
- family and ladies rides and outings
- riding to other communities for events and traveling trophies
- organized and held complete avalanche training and survival courses locally and at Valemont
- assisted with snowmobile safety seminars at schools (ASA Sled Smart)
- obtained sponsorship and developed area trail maps for all trails club is affiliated with and sold as fund raiser
- provide monthly newsletter to all active members
- annual Christmas parties for kids - family bowling event
- participate in local parades with floats
- promote and sell annual memberships, trail & day passes, ASA raffles
- make yearly donations to Chamber of Commerce, Christmas hamper project and breast cancer research – donated to Lyndon Ballard heart fund
- annual wind-up and crank-up barbecues
- attend ASA spring and fall meetings/award banquets
- attend and man Chamber of Commerce display booth at annual ASA equipment fall show
- many Whitecourt Trailblazers have held various positions as club executive as well as ASA executive and other organizations affiliated with ASA and snowmobiling in North America
- club members do constant trail development & maintenance on the 322 km system, with a one-time annual trail program every November. Members of the club have donated time and equipment to date of 6394 hours for a volunteer contribution of \$312,510.22 to the system and community.
- leasing and maintenance of the Eagle River Recreation area to generate funds
- over the years the club has recognized the efforts of families and individuals for their work and dedication to the club and snowmobiling in awards for youngest rider, oldest rider, rollover, safety, high mileage, exceptional contribution, most supporting member and most supporting family