

2018 AOA President's report

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I'd like to start by thanking my fellow Board Members who have provided excellent advice and sound judgement to keep me on track and the AOA moving forward in a time of change.

And a special thanks to our Executive Director, Bogi, for her energy and enthusiasm for promoting our sport and for going above and beyond the call of duty to ensure our new outreach programs in Cochrane and Airdrie were a success. I hope these can continue to flourish over the coming years and develop into new orienteering clubs.

Change is coming to us through a new Accountability Framework being implemented by Alberta Sport Connection (ASC), who provide a major source of our revenue as a Provincial Sport Organisation (PSO). While change can be difficult to manage, it is the AOA Board's belief that the changes ASC wants to see will benefit our sport. Some of the changes we are working on are:

- Extending orienteering programming outside the established areas of Calgary and Edmonton.
- Membership management and reporting
- Policy development and implementation

Perhaps one of the more contentious changes ASC wants to see, for AOA at least, is that all PSO's act as governing bodies for their sport in Alberta. I don't know what the final outcome of this will be for orienteering, but may include clubs adopting policies, event sanctioning and provincial team selection.

So, what did we achieve in 2018? Bogi has been too busy for me to report everything, but some of the highlights are:

Two new outreach programs in Cochrane and Airdrie, which add programming in another sport zone to the two currently served by Edmonton and Calgary. These are going to require multi-year support before they become self-sufficient programs and hopefully, new clubs. Together, these programs benefited over one hundred youths. We need programming in four zones to satisfy the new minimum requirement set out by ASC.

An essential component of these outreach programs has been the "Orange Marks the Spot" resource which was developed in partnership with the "Be Fit for Life Network". Equally essential were the maps created by Don Bayly in Cochrane and Michael Svoboda in Airdrie.

We have also taken our first steps with "Team Alberta" through sponsorship of an athletes' camp at the Alberta Orienteering Championships at Redwater, northeast of Edmonton. Despite the less than ideal weather, 23 athletes stayed at the camp while 70 athletes attended the championships. The camp provided a great venue for HPP members to impart their race experiences and tips for success to junior athletes. Based on this, we look forward to continuing the athletes' camp in coming years. I'd like to add a special thankyou to all the volunteers from EIOC who braved the cold and wet conditions to make the championships such a success.

The last highlight of 2018 I want to mention is the spring training camp held at Kamp Kiwanis, west of Calgary. 45 athletes attended this event and benefitted from training on several maps in the surrounding area, with a final Sunday afternoon forest event on the Elbow Bluffs map. The presentation by Magali on Saturday evening was especially entertaining!

So, what's up for the AOA in 2019?

Discussions with the clubs around the role of the AOA, adoption of policies, membership fees and what "governance" means will continue with a view to having these finalised by the end of 2019. The outcome of these discussions will be particularly important if we want to continue receiving funding from ASC.

I also hope we will be able to implement a consistent membership reporting process between the two clubs that meets new requirements from ASC.

The Board's financial focus will be to target expenditures on activities that improve our "score" with ASC and thereby improve the delivery of orienteering by AOA and our clubs.

In 2019, we will be ending the "Pursuit of Athletic Excellence" grant, where club athletes can receive compensation for attending major events and training camps out of province. The "Leadership" grant will be extended to include AOA members who travel-to officiate (at the 300 level or higher) in Canada Cup (or higher level) events or contribute to a key organizer role of a major event. No changes are planned for the "High Performance" grant.

A new grant will be created to support club programs that serve under represented groups. An example of this is the SOGO Access program which enables children with challenged abilities - behavioural, mental and/or physical - to access the outdoors and be a part of SOGO.

Next, I'd like to propose an Alberta Compass Series of five forest events. The idea to use the term "compass" rather than "cup" comes from something I heard during the Orienteering Canada conference in Whitehorse last August and is supposed to sound more "inviting" and less "hard-core competitive". The series would consist of the AOC middle (or long?) event and four forest "B" events, with each club organising two. I believe this should not add any extra work for either club. Winners in each age category will be decided by their best three (or four?) results on a points system. I want to encourage members from each club to attend the other club's events. Details still need to be worked out!

I want to finish by thanking all the volunteers who have made orienteering a success in Alberta (and at the COCs in Whitehorse) this year. Without you giving up your valuable time, our sport would not exist. And I encourage you all to get out next year to as many events as possible.

Thankyou for your attention.