

May 4, 2021
Deputation of Celine Szoges

DEPUTATION: TOWN OF THE BLUE MOUNTAINS WEE WILLI WINKELS DAY

Purpose of this Deputation: To request that the Town of The Blue Mountains declare a “Wee Willi Winkels Day”, which henceforth will be celebrated yearly on a day during the March Break.

As a leading force in the development of snowboards and snowboarding, a sport which Willi first launched at the Town of The Blue Mountains, it is appropriate that Willi’s remarkable creation and legacy be recognized by the municipality in which he lived, taught, skied and snowboarded for many decades. Without Willi's craftsmanship, engineering, tenacity, audacity, marketing and problem-solving solution skills, snowboarding would not have happened in the decade which it did, and, in the Town of The Blue Mountains, Ontario, Canada

In 2028, snowboarding will enjoy its 50th anniversary. If a “Town of The Blue Mountains Wee Willi Winkels Day” is declared for March 2022, there will be an opportunity to create momentum for this anniversary which will be held, with great fanfare in 2028, at the Town of The Blue Mountains.

HISTORY OF DEPUTATION

Canadians know that the sport of basketball was started in Canada. I had gone to Willi's wake at the Toronto Ski Club in 2014 and knew about Willi's accomplishments for the sport of snowboarding. I assumed that all Canadian snowboarders, especially those living in the Blue Mountains region where Willi lived, would have knowledge of the contributions that Willi, in Canada, in the Town of The Blue Mountains, made to the new sport of snowboarding.

When I was working at Collingwood Collegiate Institute and at Our Lady of the Bay High School in Collingwood, Ontario, I asked the snowboarding kids if they knew that snowboarding, 'skiboarding' as it was first called by Willi, had started right here in the Town of The Blue Mountains. To my great shock, these young snowboarders had never heard of Willi. When I asked the same question to many other residents of The Town of the Blue Mountains, they too had never heard of Willi. This is sorrowful for the memory of Willi, for his family, and regretful for the history of the Town of The Blue Mountains.

May 4, 2021

Deputation of Celine Szoges, Page 2

It is my hope that the Council of the Town of The Blue Mountains will join me, and the Winkels family, to change this situation to a very positive outcome, by declaring a “Town of the Blue Mountains Wee Willi Winkels Day”, as Willi Winkels, Jr., was officially known, in the Town of the Blue Mountains, on a day during the March break.

BENEFITS TO THE TOWN OF THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

The Town of Blue Mountains will be memorialized in history books, such as the Canadian encyclopedia, the Canadian Archives, Moments in Canadian History, museums and by honours from the sports community, etc. The Town of The Blue Mountains local citizens, sports fans and tourists from around the world will be familiar with Willi through his special “Town of The Blue Mountains Wee Willi Winkels Day”.

The unmistakable tourism benefits of such a day to The Town of The Blue Mountains need no further celebration. This day would include various events, speeches, contests, parades, flags, snowboarding cheers and anthems, a display of Willi’s original artifacts, etc. The day could also include a special 2028 event for the 50th snowboarding anniversary. A spring day during the spring break, when snow boarders revel in their beloved spring snowboarding sport, would be a best possibility for the “Town of The Blue Mountain Wee Willi Winkels Day”. This event day could start as early as spring 2022.

The array of possibilities to celebrate Willi and The Town of The Blue Mountains, I leave to your creativity.

MY FINAL COMMENTS

Once one got to know Willi, he was a very generous, giving, nice person. Willi was always ready to share his possessions, and ready to discuss snowboarding. Unfortunately, cancer took snowboarding and Blue Mountains away from Willi in 2014. Today, through the creation of the “Town of the Blue Mountains Wee Willi Winkels Day”, the Town of The Blue Mountains invites Willi to snowboard its slopes here once again. Welcome home Willi.

Thank you!

May 4, 2021

Deputation of Celine Szoges, Page 3

LINKS INFORMATION ABOUT WEE WILLI WINKELS

1.BM CRAIGLEIGH DEPOT EXHIBIT AND WEBSITE

We encourage other people to share photos, etc with the online exhibit:

Willi Winkels - Museum Show and Tell - <https://youtu.be/Z73zCQ9752A>

Willi Winkels - Skateboard Sketch - <https://youtu.be/Yr2XOZkUtyA> (includes a kids' activity)

2.'SNOW PEOPLE' DOCUMENTARY TBMCREATORSPACE

[New documentary films showcase the history of Blue Mountain](#)

Feb 9, 2021"The films are about the history, science and important issues that surround the most prominent physiographic feature of TBM - the '**Blue Mountain**' itself," said Tracy **Strnad**, director ...

3. WILLI BEER NORTHWIND BREWERY

Wee Willi Winkels Helles Lager – Northwinds Brewery

German Style Helles / Gold Lager. History. The **beer** is in tribute to the late great Wee Willi **Winkels**, a true legend in the skateboard and snowboarding .

4.MOUNTAIN LIFE WILLI ARTICLE

Wee Wonder: The Legend of Wee Willi Winkels - Mountain Life

5.THE CONCRETE WAVE --THE HISTORY OF SKATEBOARDING

Warwick Publishing, Toronto 1999. pp60-63.

HISTORY WILLI'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN INNOVATION, SPONSORSHIPS, MARKETING SKATE/SKI/SNOW BOARBOARDING

Willi's family came from Germany where Willi, as he was called on his birth certificate, was born in 1956. Because Willi's father was called 'Wilhelm Winkels, Sr.', Willi received the sobriquet 'Wee Willi'. Willi's father, was a major wood window and door manufacturer industrialist in Canada. Willi's father was also the owner of several lumber mills.

May 4, 2021

Deputation of Celine Szoges, Page 4

Willi arrived in the Town of The Blue Mountains in the 1960's when his father built a chalet at the base of the Apple Bowl Ski Run in the Blue Mountains Ski Resort. Willi was a Toronto Ski Club member and an Alpine ski racer in the 1970's up to 1975.

Willi began skateboarding in the late 1960's on clay composite wheels. He tried urethane skateboard wheels which further stimulated his interest in skateboarding. As the skateboard urethane wheels were expensive in Canada, Willi first received his wheels and the 'trucks' from Florida. He now decided to create his own skateboards in Brampton.

In the 1970's Willi became more involved in skateboarding, He entered free style skateboard slalom competitions. Willi started building skateboards and spending less time making wood doors with his father. His first boards were solid wood boards. He was the first to create a wedge tail board. In 1976 he began to laminate boards. He was also the first to do that. Collegiate sports in Toronto ordered 200 boards, (with no wheels), which sold out in two days.

In order to promote his laminated fiberglass boards, the 'Willi Winkels' team was formed. Willi would do demonstrations with the kids. The kids idolized Willi. Besides free style and high jumping, Willi would demonstrate motorized boards which could go to 100 kilometers per hour. He used his motorized skateboards around Wasaga Beach.

In 1976 Willi met Lonnie Toft, a proskater for the Sims Team in California. Willi showed him his laminated board and Lonnie showed him a template for a wider skateboard. Willi immediately cut a wider shaped template. This was a turning point for skateboarding.

Lonnie took Willi's laminated board back to California's Sims manufacturing plant. A week later Lonnie entered a contest in California on Willi's board and won first place. Everyone wondered where the design had come from. The wider, fuller shape was radically different from all other boards at the time in 1976.

The next day the Sims company was overwhelmed with phone calls. Tom Sims quickly found out what Lonnie had done and called Willi. Tom Sims called at dinner time and asked if Willi could make thousands of boards like the one he made for Lonnie.

May 4, 2021

Deputation of Celine Szoges, Page 5

Willi, as is famously noted, said it was his dinner time and he would call back. Tom said: 'Screw your dinner, I am coming to Toronto tomorrow'. Willi hated to be called at dinner time' and would hang up on Sims at dinner time.

Willi showed Tom Sims his factory in Brampton and events took off into high gear. Willi began making boards for Sims and soon other manufacturers were also placing orders for Willi's laminated boards.

Willi tried to stretch the boundaries. He began to try carbon graphite boards. Willi and Lonnie started to experiment and produce 8-wheel boards.

Willi began to develop transportable skateboard ramps on trailers for demonstrations around Canada, which made the kids very happy. In 1977 Willi created a mobile modular half-pipe stage from wood for a travelling show.

Willi and Lonnie's association also resulted in pioneering the sport of snowboarding. Willi modified the 'flying yellow banana' board. The idea was to strap a skateboard without wheels which made it more torsional. He attached the deck to the plastic banana and had plastic hooks for the rider's feet. In 1978 he took the product, which he called 'Skiboard', to The Town of The Blue Mountain where he first tried it. The sight of Willi at Blue Mountains slopes was a sight to behold.

Willi entered Free Style Ski Competitions in 1976, as a ballet specialist! He often won top place in these free style competitions. He made 'ballet' skiing popular at The Town of The Blue Mountains, where there would often be a ballet ski competition at the end of the ski season in spring. Willi was one of the first free style ski competitors at Blue Mountain at age 17. He made the sport popular here.

Willi was an idea guy. He could find solutions and execute his ideas as prototypes. He developed the first snowboards with steel edges to grab the snow and ice. This was especially useful to maneuver in the icy eastern Canadian conditions.

Additionally, as the wooden laminated snowboard gained popularity, Willi started snowboard manufacturing for Sims and Burton Snowboards, while, additionally, he was also still heavily involved in skateboard manufacturing as a sideline.

May 4, 2021

Deputation of Celine Szoges, Page 6

Willi can be considered the first snowboarder at The Town of The Blue Mountains. He designed a modern snowboard with a steel edge. He began to experiment on old 'winter sticks' and determined they needed a modern style binding, as the old ones were held by a rope from the tip to the front. He was founder of a latch-style binding for wooden snowboards. He further worked on snowboard lamination. Willi was simply: a wood genius.

Willi was one of the first to start marketing the snowboard in Canada and North America. Soon after his 'skiboard' performance at The Town of The Blue Mountains, Willi went with Lonnie and Tom to Mammoth Mountain, California, where snowboarding really took off. Later, he went to other locations in North America, Europe.

In 1978 'skiboarding' was renamed 'snowboarding' at Mammoth Mountain. Willi had created the word 'snowboard'. Willi was unable to license the 'snowboard' noun due to copyright regulations issues.

Henceforth, Willi started to get more involved in snowboarding and less involved in skateboarding. He continued to make skateboards but he focused more on snowboards. He created the famous harness for the snowboard.

Willi became a ski coach and instructor in the mid 1980's. Willi instructed for the 'Snow Hawks' travelling ski school in the early 1990's with Mitch Gorski Racing. He worked at Alpine Ski club up to the 2008, working during there on weekends for years.

Willi was also an innovator in several other fields. He liked to snowboard to music. Willi designed a precursor model to the walkman in the early 1980's. He always had music in his ears before it was popular to do so.

Once one got to know Willi, he was a very generous, giving, nice person. Willi was always ready to share his possessions, and ready to discuss snowboarding. Unfortunately, cancer took snowboarding and Blue Mountains away from Willi in 2014. Today, through the creation of the "Town of the Blue Mountains Wee Willi Winkels Day", the Town of The Blue Mountains invites Willi to snowboard its slopes its slopes here once again. Welcome home Willi.