

Application for the Graham/Fisher Family Contribution to Speedskating

The Graham/Fisher family is being nominated for the Gagné Family Award for Family of the Year (2022) given their extensive contribution to Speedskating at the Club, Provincial, National and International levels. Their passion and dedication to the sport of Speed Skating spans 50+ years, involving 7 family members and over 3 generations. Without a doubt, the family's passion for the sport is as strong today as it was in the 1970's when it began. What is especially noteworthy is how their efforts have not waned, even through births, family loss, relocations, illness and a Global Pandemic. Their longstanding involvement and impact will be shown in the timeline, photos and testimonials outlined below.



Photo of Debby Fisher at the Calgary Olympic Oval where she serves as the Technical Director of Calgary Speedskating Association (CSSA) still today

This family's passion for the sport of Speedskating all began with Debby (Graham) Fisher who started racing on hockey skates at age 8 and competed in Inter School Competitions until she was 14. When in grade 9, her Physical Education teacher (Mr Paul Renfree) encouraged her to join Saint John Amateur Speed Skating in the 1969-70 Season. As Jim Morrell, who worked with the Sports and Recreation Branch of the Government of New Brunswick, recalls: Speedskating was not a well known sport in New Brunswick (NB) in 1969 and Debby was one of its few skaters. She was part of a small group of skaters who formed the government sponsored NB Long Track Team in the 1971 Canada Winter Games in Saskatoon. This led to her representing NB in various competitions as listed in the Summary of Contributions below.

Because of her initial involvement, speedskating became a family affair with her father, Ronald E Graham, getting involved by using his skills as a Teacher and Principal to serve as an administrator for the sport of speedskating in NB. His two younger children, Rodney Graham and Linda (Graham) Oliver joined as skaters in the 1970's. In working for the Government of NB and being charged with promoting sport in the province, Jim Morrell remembers Ronald as a "... determined and highly organized man" whose tireless efforts led to the development of the Constitution and formation of the New Brunswick Speedskating Association (NBSSA). He credits Ronald's efforts as being a major driver in speedskating becoming a recognized sport in NB. A detailed list of Ron various roles and accomplishments are outlined later in the application.

Ronald's efforts coincided with Debby becoming NB's provincial coach. Jim Morell describes her as not only a strong high performance coach, but a strong contributor to the sport at the grassroots level in terms

of attracting skaters. In his opinion, Debby is "gifted" at attracting, encouraging and coaching young skaters which can be seen by her work in the province of NB and later in Alberta.

NEW BRUNSWICK AMATEUR SPEED SKATING ASSOCIATION		
Executive Meeting		
Tuesday, March 6, 1973		
Saint John, N. B.		
I. Call To Order		
The President, Mr. Ron Graham, opened the Meeting at 7:30 p.m. with all executive members in attendance.		
II. Minutes of Last Meeting		
The minutes of the previous meeting, held December 13, 1972, were read and approved.		
III. Business Arising From Minutes		
a) Constitution Committee - The President has been doing some investigation and will have a proposed constitution ready for the Annual Meeting. The Secretary is to send the President 1 copy of the existing constitution and 1 copy of a proposed constitution. It was noted that any constitutional changes must be circulated to each of the members at least 14 days prior to the Annual Meeting.		
b) Rules Committee - Mr. Robert Donner has declined the invitation to Chair this Committee and at present the Chairmanship of this Committee is vacant.		
c) Awards Committee - The Secretary forwarded all materials relating to awards to the new Chairman, Mrs. A. Hellingwerf. Mr. Graham reported that Mrs. Hellingwerf ordered this year's awards in January, but has not received anything yet.		
d) Payment - C.A.S.S.A. Awards Committee - This item has been taken care of (\$1.50 outstanding for 1971-72).		
e) Treasurer's Report - Cheques written since last Executive Meeting include: 1) Canadian Outdoor - Transportation = \$576.00; 2) Canadian Outdoor - Accommodations, Meals, Registration = \$110.00.		
Bank Balance As of March 6, 1973		\$447.82
Anticipated Income		
1) Reimbursement from C.A.S.S.A. for Canadian Outdoor Transportation	\$288.00	
2) Refund from H. Milburn re Accommodations, Meals, etc.	24.75	
3) Saint John Club's share for accommodations, meals, etc.	28.62	
4) Tri-Village Club's share for accommodations, meals, etc.	28.62	
Total Assets To Work With		<u>369.99</u>
		<u>\$817.81</u>

Roderick (Rod) Fisher and Debby started dating during the summer of 1971, which led to him being introduced to the sport of Speed Skating. According to Debby and Rod, it was a matter of him either joining in on the sport or get left behind alone all Winter. He went on to become immersed into higher levels of officiating. In 1976 he participated in a National Referees Clinic in Moncton, NB that was the training ground for many of the future Top Level 4-5 Referees in Canada (including Rod). Rod is known for his longevity as a Referee in the Sport of Speed Skating by serving as a referee for over 40 years. This resulted in him mentoring many speedskating referees in the Maritimes and was awarded the Official of the Decade in NB for his contribution in the 1980's.



Photo of Rodney Fisher (Far Right) when he represented Canada as a Referee at the World University Games held in Bulgaria in 1989.

Together, Debby and Rod were the co-founders of the Fredericton Amateur Speedskating Club Inc (FASSCI) in 1976-77. The first skater to be registered with the Club in 1976 was Penny Belyea who was 9 years of age at the time. She describes Rod and Debby as having a significant impact in her life in terms of being her coach, her caregiver during meets and later teaching her to coach young speed skaters in Fredericton. Penny expresses appreciation for the fact that the couple “included me in everything related to speedskating” and credits their support and encouragement to her confidence as a teacher for the past 33 years. What stands out for Penny is how Debby and Rod “truly connected with people and welcomed anyone who wanted to skate with the club”.



Ribbons from Penny Belyea's first speeskiating competition with the Fredericton Amateur Speedskating Club ((FASSCI) where she was coached and supported by Debby and Rod Fisher.



Photo of Penny Belyea (Left) and Debby Fisher (Right) at the 20th Anniversary of the Fredericton Amateur Speedskating Club (FASSCI)

Linda Gough a former parent and board member in the beginnings of FASSCI describes Rod and Debby as incredibly passionate and dedicated leaders in the Club who made the sport fun for all children who were involved and brought the community together to support speedskating competitions. She talked about their perseverance in securing ice time which was no easy task in a city predominantly focused on hockey, transporting crash mats to meets with small children in tow, personally organizing meets and getting young skaters excited by the sport. Linda remembers the couple resuming their presence at the rink only a week after the birth of one of their sons and their continued presence throughout one son's Cancer treatments.

Christopher Fisher was born into the sport of Speed Skating in 1978. He had a challenging start to life being diagnosed with Cancer in June of 1979 at 18 months of age. Following 2 full years of treatment which finished in 1981, he began his involvement in multiple sports which included Speed Skating at the age of 3.5 years. He travelled to the rink many early mornings with his parents in the early days of FASSCI, to train as the Club had limited ice availability.

Allan Fisher was born into the Sport of Speed Skating in February of 1983. From an infant, he traveled to those early morning practices for the FASSCI almost every day of the week. Club members babysat him many times while Mom (Debby), Dad (Rod), and Christopher were busy coaching and participating at practices. He also attended all the local and regional competitions where his parents were volunteering as Coach and Official. He received his first trophy (5 years old) at the NB Outdoor Championship in 1988, from Canadian Olympian Gaetane Boucher.



Photo of Allan Fisher, age 5, receiving his first trophy from Gaetan Boucher in 1988 shortly after he had competed in the Calgary Olympic games

In Fredericton, Rod and Debby are not only credited with founding the first ever Amateur Speedskating Club, but with raising the profile of the sport of Speedskating through their Coaching, mentoring referees and coaches, volunteer work and initiation of local, provincial and International Speedskating competitions. Due in large part to their efforts and passion, the club is still going strong.



Picture of Christopher Fisher (Far Right), Johnny McInerney, and Jeff Scholten (Middle) who Debby coached from the ages of 5 to 18 years of age. Jeff is now a Coach with Speedskating Canada in Montreal and was a member of the Canadian National Team for several years where he won numerous medals at the World Cup and World Short Track Championships.

Debby left Fredericton and her family in 1997 to study in the Canadian National Coaching Institute in Calgary for her Level 4-5 Coaching Certification. In 1998, she assumed the full -time position of “Development Specialist” and was sub-contracted to be the Head Coach of the Calgary Speedskating Association (CSSA). In the role of CSSA Technical Director from 1998-2005, she used her talents and passion for the Sport to attract and develop skaters within CSSA. Through her leadership, the Club went from having a membership of 325 to 550 skaters, the highest membership CSSA has ever had. Furthermore, she served as a mentor and resource for other Speedskating Clubs in Alberta hosted multi-club campus every month in the role of Technical Director. As a result of these efforts, Debby contributed to the sport of Speedskating by not only developing young speedskaters, but developed the skill of Club coaches.

To support Debby’s career and to further the family’s involvement in the sport, the Fisher/Graham permanently relocated to Alberta in July 1999. Moving a family was a huge sacrifice, but one that Debby says she does not regret.

Upon relocating to Calgary and arriving at the Olympic Oval, Allan became a member of the Calgary Speed Skating Association where his focus shifted from skating recreationally to becoming a competitive racer. He trained and competed throughout Alberta for a couple of years leading to him achieving some of his goals highlighted in the list of contributions below.

Debby returned to being the Technical Director of CSSA in 2018 and continues in this role today. Her dedication to the sport continued throughout Covid where she ensured that CSSA skaters could continue to develop in the sport throughout multiple lockdowns and the prolonged closure of the Olympic Oval. When many sports across Canada were shut down in response to Covid, Debby persisted in finding innovative

ways to keep youth skaters engaged in Speedskating. For example, she developed weekly on-line dryland training, initiated outdoor long track training in the Community of Redwood Meadows in Bragg Creek and led regular outdoor inline skating, etc.

The significant contribution of the Graham/Fisher Family to the Sport of Speedskating is evidenced not only by the longevity of their involvement, but by the outstanding number and generations of skaters, families, coaches, referees, timers, amateur clubs, starters and high performance skaters who have been supported by their skill and passion for the sport. I can think of no other family who is more deserving of this award.



Photo of Debby, Rod, Christopher and Allan at a Long Track meet at Lily Lake in 1986. In this race, Debby was Coaching, Rod served as Referee, Christopher was racing and young Allan was spectating as he was too young to race.

Summary: Graham/Fisher Family Contribution

Debra (Debby Graham) Fisher

- Attended Canada Winter Games as an athlete, Saskatoon 1971
- Co-founder with her husband Rod of the Fredericton Amateur Speed Skating Club Inc. 1976-77 season . Head Coach from 1976-1997 when she moved to Calgary Alberta
- Assistant Provincial Coach and Technical Coordinator for NBASSA 1975-79
- Assisted Technical Director of CASSA (Jack Walters) in writing first formal Coaching Manual for Clubs across Canada 1977

- Provincial Coach for NBASSA 1979-83
- Was Meet Coordinator or Assistant with all Local and Provincial Competitions in Fredericton NB 1978-1997
- Meet Coordinator of the Canadian Age Class Championships in Fredericton 1984 and 94.
- Meet Coordinator of the Canadian National Team Trials in Fredericton 1990.
- World Short Track Championships , Moncton NB 1982 - First place Manual Timer
- Short Track Coach for Team NB at the Canada Winter Games 1983, Long Track Coach 1979 and 1999 Canada Winter Games.
- Speed Skate Canada Award of Excellence 1984 CASSA AGM
- Canada Winter Games Cape Breton NS 1987--Member of NB Mission Staff
- CASSA Centennial Medal 1987, for Long Term Development of the Sport of Speed Skating
- New Brunswick Coach of the Year 1989 (Year of the Coach)
- Speed Skate Canada Short Track Committee 1992
- Speed Skate Canada Coach of the Year 1993
- VP Coaching Education, Speed Skate Canada's National Board 1993 – 1998
- Development Coordinator at the Olympic Oval, University of Calgary 1998-2009
- Head Coach and Technical Director Calgary Speed Skating Association 1999-2005
- Acted as Technical Director for Alberta Speed Skating Association 1998-2009
- Lead Coach for the Alberta Short Track for Canadian Short Track Age Class Championships 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002 & 2004. Assisted on the coaching staff for Team Alberta in 2003 and 2005
- Lead Coach for BC Team at the Canadian Short Track Age Class Championships 2010
- Lead Coach for a group of skaters from the CSSA to a Global International Club Competition Germany 2001
- Inducted into Speed Skate Canada Hall of Fame 2005 at the SSC AGM
- Part Time Technical Director for Speed Skating in Northern BC 2005-06
- Developed Speed Skate Canada's Coaching Education Program (co-written with Dr. Sean Maw, Bill Wotherspoon, and Wendy Walker 2005 – 2007)
- Master Facilitator and Evaluator for SSC 's National Coaching Certification Program 2007-Present
- Have conducted Coaching Clinics in NB, Alberta, BC, Yukon, NWT, Nunavut. 1977-Present
- Lead a group from the Prince George Club to a Global International Club Competition Italy 2006
- Certified as Level 4 NCCP Coach 2006
- Inducted into New Brunswick Sports Hall of Fame 2006
- Inducted into Fredericton Wall of Fame 2009
- Short Track Coach for Team BC 2011 Canada Winter Games
- Volunteer at Vancouver Olympic Games – 2010, Long Track
- SSC Level 3 Certified Lap Counter – 2009 , Officiated at many Canadian National Team Trials, and World Cup Short Track Events at the Olympic Oval , University of Calgary 1998-Present .
- Actively involved in Skating Camps ,Coaching Clinics all over Canada ,and as far away as South Africa (2002)
- Technical Director of Calgary Speed Skating Association 2018-present



Ronald E Graham

The following is a brief account of the involvement of Ronald E. Graham in the Sport of Speed Skating in the local area of Saint John NB, the province of NB, and Nationally

- Saint John Amateur Speed Skating Club
 - Treasure 1971-72
 - President 1972-73
 - Secretary 1975-76
- NBASSA (now Speed Skate New Brunswick)
 - President 1974-75, 77-78, 79, 80-81
 - Secretary 1976
- CASSA (Speed Skating Canada)
 - Member of Board of Directors 1983-84, Chairman of Hall of Fame Committee
 - Attended CASSA AGM's 1972,73,74,76,77,79,83,84
- Coach-Level 1 of NCCP Program 1979
- Starter Level 3 CASSA 1987

Awards-CASSA Award of Excellence 1984 ,for the Development of Speed Skating over many years
CASSA 100 Year Medal 1987--Long Time service to the Sport of Speed Skating in NB and Canada
Life memberships -Saint John Amateur Speed Skating Club, NB Amateur Speed Skating Association,
Canadian Amateur Speed Skating Association, 1982

Competitions attended

- Canadian Indoor Championships St Foye Quebec 1972, Manager Team NB
- Canadian Outdoor Championships , Red Deer AB Manager of Team NB
- Co Chair of Organizing Committee, and Meet Coordinator Canadian Indoor Championships , Saint John NB 1977
- Canada Winter Games, Brandon Manitoba, 1979
- Manager of NB Team alongside his daughter, as Team NB Coach
- As President of NBASSA, worked closely with the Organizing Committee of The World Short Track Championships 1982 in Moncton NB (officiated at the Competition)
- Canadian Indoor Short Track Championships and National Team Trials , Fredericton NB 1984 Assistant Starter
- North American Indoor Championships , Saint John NB 1984,-Chairman of Awards Committee and Assistant Starter.
- Canada Winter Games, Cape Breton NS 1987 Assistant Starter (Qualified as level 3)
- Many NB Local and Provincial Competitions, too many to mention here .



Photo of Ronald Graham handing out awards to Canadian Team members at the International Competition in Fredericton in 1980. He was serving as President of NBASSA

Roderick B.Fisher (Rod)

Rod and Debby started dating during the summer of 1971. It was in the Fall of 1971 that he was introduced to the sport of Speed Skating, as it was either join in or get left behind alone all winter. He started off slowly, but got immersed into higher levels officiating in a short amount of time. In 1976 he participated in a National Referees Clinic in Moncton, NB that was the training ground for many of the future Top Level 4-5 Referees in Canada (including Rod).

- Co founder of the Fredericton Amateur Speed Skating Club Inc.1976-77 season
- Club Coach with FASSCI 1976-1998
- Treasure of NBASSA 1979
- International Competition in Moncton NB 1980 Assistant Referee
- International Competition in Fredericton NB 1980 Chief Referee
- Volunteered at the World Short Track Competition Moncton NB 1982 -Finish Line Judge
- Canadian Short Track Championships and National Team Trials Fredericton NB 1984-Assistant Referee
- North American Short Track Championships , Saint John NB 1984- Chief Referee
- North American Short Track Championships St Louis ,1985-Assistant Referee from Canada
- Also was Referee from Canada at North American Championships , Champagne IL and Lake Placid New York
- World Short Track Championships in Montreal Que 1987-Assistant Referee
- Presented Award of Excellence CSSA AGM Montreal 1987--Long Term involvement in the Sport of Speed Skating
- Olympic Games in Calgary 1988- Assigned to contingent of Referees for the Short Track event
- Certified as a level 4 Referee
- World Student Games Bulgaria , 1989 Assistant Referee from Canada
- Canadian Special Olympics National Competition 1989-Chief Referee
- Canadian Team Trials, Fredericton NB 1990 Chief Referee
- Named Official of the Decade for NB 1990
- Canadian Short Track Age Class Championships 1991 Winnipeg Manitoba Chief Referee
- Canadian Short Track Age Class Championships 1992 Chicoutimi, Quebec 1992 Chief Referee
- Canadian Short Track Age Class Championships 1994 Fredericton, NB Assistant Referee
- Canadian Short Track Age Class Championships 1997 Charlottetown, PEI, Chief Referee
- North American Age Class Championships, Saint John NB 1998 Chief Referee
- Mentor to numerous Referees for Atlantic Canada that would progress to Level 4-5 national and International
- Moved to Calgary in 1999 - Started refereeing at all local and Provincial competitions 1999-2013
- Alberta Winter Games , Sherwood Park Alberta 2000, Chief referee
- World Cup Short Track Competitions held at the Olympic Oval -Assisted as a referee years ??
- World Cups Long Track , and World Long Track Championships , Olympic Oval - acted as a Corner Judge many times.
- Awarded of Excellence for an Official AGM SSC 2013-Recognition for Long Term involvement as a Referee and other Official Positions 1972-2013
- Retired in 2013



Photo of Rodney Fisher (Far Right) when he was Assistant Referee at the World Short Track Speedskating Championships, Montreal, 1987

Rodney A Graham

- Rodney competed in numerous competitions locally, provincially for a number of years.
- Competed Nationally at the Canadian Long Track Championships in Winnipeg Manitoba in 1974 as part of Team NB.
- Given his love of the sport, he Volunteered in a number of officiating positions. He started with Lap Counting and was the Chief Lap Counter at the Canadian Indoor Championships in Saint John NB in 1977.
- Volunteer at the World Short Track Competition Moncton, NB 1982 as an Assistant Lap Counter.
- Between 1982-84 his interest changed to Timing (Electronic Timing specifically). He assisted Maurice Gagne from Quebec on every major Canadian Championships or National Team Selection Trials held in the Atlantic Region from 1984-1998 (Finishlynx Timing system was first used in the region at the North American Championships held in Saint John NB in 1998. (Major Competitions listed previously for Debby, Ronald, and Roderick (Rod))
- He was in charge of the Electronic Timing System which was purchased to be used at all local and provincial competitions for a number of years.
- He continues to follow the Sport in Saint John and attend the NB Short Track Championships each year that it is held at Harbour Station.



Photo of Rodney Fisher starting a race at Lily Lake in Saint John NB, Early 1970's



Photo of Rodney Graham with sister Debby Fisher at the Awards Ceremony where she was inducted into the Fredericton Wall of Fame in 2009

Linda (Graham) Oliver

Linda started the sport of speed skating with Saint John Amateur Speed Skating Club at the age of 12, following in her older sister's footsteps. Skated competitively at Indoor and Outdoor meets and championships in Saint John and across New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island, from ages 12 to 19.

- Competed in the 1975 Canada Games Trials in Long Track for the NB Team.
- Coached young skaters for one season with the Saint John Amateur Speed Skating Club (One of her young skaters went on to represent Great Britain at 2 Olympic Games in Short Track).
- Canadian Indoor Championships, Saint John NB in 1977.
- Volunteered as a Recorder in the Office keeping track of the skaters progression from heats through to the finals in all distances
- World Short Track Competition Moncton NB 1982 -Volunteered as Statistician and Results Recorder in the Office
- Recording Secretary for Saint John Amateur Speed Skating Club for a year.
- Promoted the sport of Speedskating at her place of work, Island View Elem. School
- Linda stills enjoys skating for recreation until present day



Photo of Linda with long time coaches and supporters of Speedskating in NB, Peter Steel and Gary Pollock

Christopher Fisher

- Born into the sport of Speed Skating in 1978
- First official race was when he was 5 years old and competed in NB, NS and PEI until he was 13
- He participated in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Program where one of his tasks was to volunteer which he accomplished by coaching the Learn to Skate Program for FASSCI. Feedback from parents at the time was that he was a committed young coach who was respected by the kids he taught.
- He became a Level 1 Starter in Speed Skating for NB, following in his Grandfather Graham's footsteps.
- Even when not actively skating, he supported the Fredericton Club and the sport, by fundraising and volunteering for many years.



Photo of Christopher Fisher at a race with Ronald Fisher being the official shown beside the skaters.

Allan Fisher

Allan was born into the Sport of Speed Skating in February of 1983

- He received his first trophy (5 years old) at the NB Outdoor Championship in 1988, from Canadian Olympian Gaetane Boucher.
- Trained and competed in Speed Skating all over the Maritimes until 16 years old when moving to Calgary, AB
- Member of the Calgary Speed Skating Association, he decided he would focus on being a competitive racer, instead of a recreational participant. He trained and competed all over Alberta for a couple of years leading to him achieving some of his goals.
- Attended the Alberta Games in Sherwood Park in 2000. He earned an overall Gold medal for individual races and the relay event in Short Track, as well as an overall Silver medal in Long Track.
- National Short Track Age Class Championships, Regina, Saskatchewan 2000. This was his first attendance at a national level competition as a member of Team Alberta. On the next weekend he also competed at the National Short Track Age Class Championships in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan with the Alberta Team.
- Accepted into the National Sports School in Calgary in 2001 as a Short Track Speed Skater (Grade 11).
- North American Short Track Age Class Championships 2001 , Wyandotte Michigan. As part of Team Alberta, he won a Bronze Medal
- National Short Track Age Class Championships Prince George, BC 2001, member of Alberta

Team

- World International Club Competition, Mannheim Germany 2001, member of Calgary Speed Skating Association contingent of skaters who represented Canada (The group of 6 skaters placed 10th out of 38 Clubs from around the world.)
- National Short Track Age Class Championships -Dartmouth NS 2002-Member of Alberta Team
- North American Short Track Age Class Championships Campbellton NB 2002, member of Team Alberta
- North American Short Track Age Class Championships 2003 , Milwaukee Wisconsin USA , co winner 1st overall Senior Division. Member of Team Alberta
- National Short Track Age Class Championships Surrey BC 2005--Member of Team Alberta
- Qualified for the Alberta Provincial Team 2006-Retired from competitive speed skating ,to focus on his education .

After retirement Allan continued volunteering in the sport of speed skating at the Olympic Oval. He was a Track Stewart for many National level competitions and Team Trials. He also volunteered as the Olympic Oval Mascot during the First World Cup Short Track event in the mid 2000's.