

National Orienteering Week April 30 - May 8

Join the orienteering clinic on May 1st



Cheryl and Troy Smith are pictured above, well into an orienteering competition during the Canadian Orienteering Championships at Hopewell Rocks in New Brunswick. This event was billed as the first ever orienteering race on the ocean floor.

by Cheryl Smith

While attending University, I had the good fortune to meet National and North American Orienteering Champion Pam James of Nova Scotia. This introduction spurred my interest in the sport, which was renewed in 2008 when I heard the National Championships would be hosted in New Brunswick.

For the past several years, this orienteering addiction has seen me and my husband travelling the province during the spring, early summer and fall months to participate in

events; adding many miles to our car and shoes. The variety of competitors never ceases to amaze—families with children in strollers, fiercely competitive twenty-somethings and eighty year old great-grandmothers all sharing a love for the outdoors. I am forever startled by how little-known Orienteering is. Although many have heard of it, few seem to know much about it and fewer still have tried it.

Orienteering is a sport involving navigation with map and compass. Participants run, walk, ski, mountain bike, or even canoe (depending on the

venue) to a series of points shown on a map. Each participant or group of participants chooses their own route—on and off trail—that will help them locate points in the landscape and return to the finish in the least time.

This inexpensive sport is for everyone, regardless of age, experience or fitness level. It involves map reading, strategic thinking and decision-making and provides a great workout. Most events have courses designed for beginners. Families and groups can enjoy events together or individuals can race at their own pace. Orienteering events take place anywhere that can be mapped including parkland, forest, schoolyards, complete wilderness or campuses.

Any type of map can be used for orienteering, but the best ones are very detailed five-colour topographic maps which are developed specifically for orienteering. These maps show details such as contours, vegetation, path/road networks, and natural and man-made features.

As part of National Orienteering Week, I will be providing an introductory Orienteering Clinic in hopes

of attracting some new orienteers to the sport and eventually developing ongoing events in the Cape Breton area. The clinic will take place on Sunday, May 1, 2011 at the Gaelic College in St. Ann's Bay, from 1-3pm.

Participants will learn basic map-reading and navigational skills, and will have the opportunity to complete a beginner-level orienteering course. Maps are provided and the clinic is free of charge (however, a \$2 donation to cover the costs of map printing would be appreciated). As the clinic will take place outdoors, participants should dress for the weather and note that washroom facilities will not be available.

For more information or to pre-register (not required, but will ensure enough maps are available), please contact Cheryl Smith at 929-2832 or via email: lostinthewoods2011@hotmail.com

If you love the great outdoors, exploring and fitness, I highly recommend giving orienteering a try. Information/Events by the Orienteering Association of Nova Scotia can be found at www.orienteeringns.ca

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