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Extreme cold doesn?t scare away skaters in Maynooth

Barb Lindenberg and her son Elahame Russell take a few laps at the Maynooth outdoor rink. / NATE SMELLE Staff

By Nate Smelle

Despite the -41 degree wind chill outside, some 20 brave souls came out for the second **Skate Maynooth** event of the season last Friday night. Now in its ninth year, this season the weekly winter gathering organizing committee is planning to change this up a bit by hosting several themed public skating events. The theme on this night ? vinyl on ice. Spinning the tunes for the skaters was DJ Kio. Having travelled from his home in Argentina to visit family in Maynooth, he said he was grateful to have the opportunity to lend his skills on the turntable to such a unique community gathering.

?We wanted to experience the real Canadian winter and we are definitely getting that experience tonight,? DJ Kio said laughing. ?It's very beautiful up here in the winter and I have met a lot of really nice people. Maynooth is a really cool community.?

Skate Maynooth committee member Roy Mitchell said the committee has had such a positive response to the idea of a vinyl-themed public skate that they are planning on doing it again. He said anyone who would like to skate to some of their own favourite music is invited to bring their records to upcoming events and they will add them into the rotation. For those who may want to join in the fun on ice, but do not have a pair of skates, Mitchell said there is a skate box on site with skates of all sizes for people to use. He encourages anyone in the community with a pair of skates they are no longer using to drop by and deposit them in the box, so others can use them. Hastings Highlands Councillor Alex Walder showed up to offer his assistance in the kitchen, preparing and serving hot chocolate, chili and cake to the skaters when they came indoors to warm up. One of the things he believes makes the event so special is how it brings people together during a time of year when many in the community are spending most of their time indoors.

?It's all about the camaraderie,? said Walder.

?It's something that everyone can take part in... You don't even have to skate, you can just come out have some warm food, hot chocolate and socialize. It's a perfect way to keep warm and have fun with your friends on a cold winter night.?

Organizing committee member Ken Fraser also recognizes how valuable Skate Maynooth is to the community. Having moved north from southern Ontario many years ago, he sees public gatherings like these where people can have fun together and squeeze in a bit of exercise as wise use of community resources.

?All around it's a really great night out for everyone,? said Fraser.

?I grew up in Sarnia and we never had anything like this. Events like Skate Maynooth give the community ? and especially the kids ? a reason to get together and go skating, while having some fun outdoors with their friends and family. It's also a good way to get to know your neighbours.?

Skate Maynooth takes place every Friday evening throughout the winter from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m. at the outdoor skating rink in Maynooth. For more information visit the Skate Maynooth! Facebook page.