

The Canadians are coming!

How often does it happen that, as an athlete, you get to compete for a Canadian Championship in your own home town? The answer for most competitor's is; never.

In past years it has been held in various locations including; Ponoka and Medicine Hat, Alberta, Regina, Saskatchewan and other far away places. Williams Lake students have been there and those who rose to the pinnacle and won Canadian Championships include Ian Pare (Ponoka -1999 – Bareback), Willee Twan (Ponoka -1999 Team Roping – with Clayton Moore, Pouce Coupe), Keely Durrell (Medicine Hat -2003 Breakaway), Rease Pare (Medicine Hat -2003 Steer Wrestling), Kyle Lozier (Medicine Hat -2005 Bull Riding) and Virgil Poffenroth (Medicine Hat -2007 All Around Cowboy).

For four hard-working, lucky high school athletes the dream of challenging for a national title, at home, in front of friends and family, has come true this year. On August 8, 9, and 10th, the Williams Lake Stampede Association, the Williams Lake Canadian High School Rodeo Finals Committee and the City of Williams Lake will host the Canadian High School Rodeo Finals which will be making its first ever appearance in BC.

Kayla Jasper and Bailey Poffenroth of Riske Creek will compete in the Goat Tying, Cody Braaten of 150 Mile will be in both the Tie Down and the Team Roping and Ty McCullough (Springhouse) will ride in the Bull Riding. These students qualified in mid-June by placing in the top five in their respective events at the BC High School Finals in Kamloops, BC. A whole season of competition comes down to three stress-filled, nerve wracking days of competition to see who moves on to Canadians and Nationals (New Mexico).

For almost forty years the western spirit in our local high schools has been kept alive and well by the students who choose to compete in high school rodeo. The generation that began competing in the sport in 1969/70 is now taking their own children to high school rodeos; it's been a BC school sport for that long. What is 'high school rodeo'?

“The National High School Rodeo Association is an international, non-profit organization dedicated to the development of sportsmanship, horsemanship and the character in the youth in our country through the sport of rodeo. Created by Texas educator and rodeo contestant Claude Mullins, the NHSRA held its first finals in Hallettsville, Texas, August. 25-27th, 1949. The NHSRA membership consists of 12,500 members from 39 states, 5 Canadian provinces and Australia.”

High school rodeo, in other words, is a big deal. A much larger sport than the average person realizes. There are close to two hundred Canadian and US colleges who have rodeo teams. The American colleges/universities offer scholarships equal to those

offered in the most popular varsity sports. Rodeo is a sport in which Canadian students are competing for those scholarships on equal footing, unlike many of the other sports where intensive American sports programs give U.S. students a huge advantage. Many of our local high school rodeo athletes have attended U.S. colleges and universities on rodeo scholarships.

Kayla, Bailey, Cody and Ty can't wait to challenge the top Canadian contenders in their chosen events for the right to be called the 'Canadian High School Rodeo Finals Champion of 2008'.

Please come out to support them in their quest to be the best!