

# ACC / North Face National Winter Leadership Course

## Ski Touring Leadership

### Goals, Expectations and General Objectives

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#### **Preamble:**

*“This course is for Alpine Club of Canada leaders. The focus of the Leadership Training Courses is to provide training for currently active section trip leaders as well as new and developing trip leaders. This is a shift in focus from previous years where the courses were primarily focused on more skilled leadership. Applicants should be individuals who the sections have confidence will continue to lead section trips and contribute to the Club.*

*This course is not designed to replace local section leadership and training initiatives; rather, it is a fine-tuning for participants who already have some background, an introduction to leadership theory and a focused learning/sharing program.*

*Participants must have pertinent skills, especially those relevant to mountain activities. Participants should be fit, strong and have confidence in their own skills. A major focus is on teaching group management, terrain management and people management skills in the mountain environment, often employing models developed in the guiding profession. Participants must show suitable leadership in the field with regard to pacing appropriate to the fitness level of a mixed group, willingness to help others and a positive attitude and ability to contribute to group discussions. (Technical climbing and first aid will not be covered and should be part of the prerequisite skills possessed by applicants. Applicants must also have previous formal avalanche skills training such as AST1 or higher.)*

*Training activities will be conducted by ACMG guides and professional members of the Canadian Avalanche Association. They will guide and instruct each segment of the program with daily field activities, and coordinate them with morning and evening presentations and group discussions. In addition, The North Face may, on selected courses, provide a representative who may contribute during the week (not in 2012).*

*This is NOT a free skiing week and participants should expect FULL days beginning and ending with classroom sessions and group discussions.*

*All of our meals will be provided and prepared by a camp cook who rounds out the course staff and will also mentor and inspire. Participants will be responsible for gathering daily weather and snowpack data and will assist with routine meal and housekeeping chores and duties.”*

## ***Goal of the program:***

To provide a national forum for club leaders to improve their own personal hard and soft leadership skills for leading groups on skis, in winter mountain terrain, in the context of Alpine Club of Canada activities at a local Section level.

## ***Course Description***

Amateur Leaders are the backbone of the Alpine Club – providing beginner, intermediate, and advanced trips to other members, allowing Sections to host broad and varied trip schedules.

With the support of The North Face, each year the ACC runs a training course for amateur leaders from across the country in recognition of the tireless work these volunteers do and their need for high quality training. The main goal of the course is to help members to become better, stronger, and safer leaders for the Sections.

In 2009, the curriculum for the TNF Winter course was revised. The course focus shifted away from rope-handling and toward avalanche safety and ski touring. A further shift was mandated by the national office of the ACC for the 2012 course. The 2012 course will focus entirely on ski-touring that does *not* require ropework or travel on glaciers. In addition, since 2010 the TNF course has integrated the Canadian Avalanche Association AST 2 (Avalanche Skills Training Level 2) course as a fundamental part of the curriculum! The course will include far more than that however and the TNF program is undergoing a shift away from a technical skills orientation more toward a soft skill leadership focus. 2012 will be a transitional year between the old style TNF courses and the emerging new TNF emphasis on leadership soft skills.

The course will cover a broad range of hard and soft leadership skills with the focus on the following:

- planning and management of ski touring trips on non-glaciated terrain;
- avalanche terrain evaluation;
- snowpack and stability evaluation and tests;
- use of bulletins, forecasts, the ATES scale, the Avaluator 2 and a formal process in decision-making;
- route finding, track setting and decision making in avalanche terrain;
- navigation using terrain, map, compass and GPS;
- route planning, route cards and route selection;
- risk theory, group dynamics, group management; and
- emergency situation management including avalanche rescue.

\*Please note the course does not cover technical climbing/skiing skills or first aid.

This will be an *intensive*, thought-provoking course with lots of learning for everybody! Conditions permitting, the majority of the daylight hours will be spent actively in the field, building skills and techniques. In the evenings – after dinner and a bit of relaxation – informal presentations and group discussions of the above topics will be held. Many mornings may begin with a theory session before heading out into the field. Based on skills and experience in previous mountaineering adventures and trip leadership, it is expected that everyone will participate in and contribute to these discussions.

## ***Creating Realistic Expectations for Yourself***

### **A Word to Participants**

The objectives presented on the following page will only be fully achieved by those participants who come into the national leadership course with a high level of previously existing knowledge, experience and leadership background. Persons with lesser skill levels may be able to attain only a portion of the objectives. To help clarify some things about this particular offering of the national leadership course this winter, here are some statements to consider:

- If you are not a leader already, this course will not make you one in seven days.
- You are an adult learner and as such you must take responsibility for your own learning. Seek to clarify topics you do not understand; in the mountains your life may depend upon it.
- You also impact the learning of others. *Display responsible behavior at all times.*
- You are a valuable part of a group. You have worth and importance as part of that group. Remain positive, contribute to discussions, help others and ask appropriate questions at appropriate times.
- Although skills used in the guiding profession are taught and demonstrated during this course, this is NOT a course about guiding or preparing you to become a guide or an assistant guide. It will certainly help any aspirants in that regard, but it is not the intent of the course in any way.
- This is not a course about extreme skiing or skiing the steeps or on advanced terrain.
- There will not be an opportunity to travel on a glacier, nor will we review roping up, crevasse rescue and glacier travel.
- This course will NOT undertake an overnight winter trip.
- This is not a course about distributive leadership. You will often be put in front of a group, occasionally for protracted periods of time, to simulate the common practice of having an experienced person leading and making decisions for a less experienced group.
- You will be part of a diverse group where both national and local concerns are being addressed in one forum. Not everything in this course will pertain to you or your home environment, and it is asked that you exercise patience while subject matter that may not currently interest you is being presented.
- This course is intended to enhance your capabilities as a “club leader”. In so doing, it may also enhance personal skills appropriate to other venues. Do not expect the focus of the course to extend outside the club perspective on anything other than rare occasions.
- Wherever possible, notify staff of perceived deficiencies in the curriculum before the course is over, while there may still be time to rectify any shortcomings.
- Every member of the group has a responsibility to assure the safety of themselves and others. Be alert, observant and open about your ability to perform a given task if it will compromise your safety or that of the group. At the same time, be open to stretching your wings and broadening your horizons by entering into activities that are new or frightening to you.

## ***General Objectives***

Upon completion of a typical Winter Leadership course, the successful participant will be able to:

1. Understand the roles and responsibilities of a trip leader.
2. Discuss leadership (including topics such as group dynamics, conflict resolution, risk homeostasis, human error and human factors in decision making).
3. Manage a ski touring group in a winter mountain environment.
4. Plan a winter ski trip.
5. Use non-glaciated winter mountain terrain safely and effectively.
6. Monitor winter mountain weather to aid in trip planning.
7. Effectively use the Avaluator 2.
8. Monitor the mountain snowpack to aid in stability evaluation.
9. Navigate in winter in the mountains.
10. Use appropriate resources to aid in planning an extended winter ski trip.
11. Behave appropriately near helicopters.
12. Use electronic communication devices.
13. Discuss management of emergency situations.
14. Reduce environmental impact while winter ski touring.

(Additional topics may be covered at the discretion of the course faculty.)

NOTE: This is a copy of part of a much larger document. The course instructors and facilitators are using a set of course objectives including the General Objectives above and a more detailed list of specific lesson objectives not included in your package. The instructors have been field testing many of these objectives over the past several winters. The actual daily schedule and objectives are subject to change due to weather, avalanche conditions or other operational concerns. Any course outline you may have received as part of the information from the main office may be revised at any time in order to facilitate achieving the various session objectives. Your patience is appreciated.

## ***Final Thoughts***

There is a good chance for some participants that this will be the most taxing program that you have ever been on. You can expect that you will wake up at 06:30AM and go to bed at 10:30 PM on most days. The pace is frenetic. Slack time is scarce, although for most there will be time to take the odd sauna or read before supper, which is about the only free time you have. If you are tired, this is a good time for a nap! Evenings are filled with group exercises and planning sessions and your attendance is required.

Being in good shape and well rested when you arrive is paramount in order to ensure you have the best experience. Even if you are in shape, be prepared to push yourself harder than normal. It is normal to feel tired when it is all over. Opting out of trips because you are tired is a last resort that compromises the safety and learning of your fellow participants as the experiences are structured with optimum group sizes in mind.

And... When all is said and done, be prepared for the time of your life.