



**15TH ANNUAL CANADIAN CHALLENGE
FEBRUARY 21-26, 2012**

The board is now planning for the 2012 race, which will follow the same 6-day, Monday to Saturday, time format as last year. Registration and vet check will be held together on Monday Feb. 21. The race will start at noon on Tuesday Feb. 22, with the 12-dog finish deadline set for Saturday Feb. 26 at 6 am. The Awards Breakfast will be held at the La Ronge Hotel & Suites starting at 9 am Saturday Feb. 26.

This gives everyone an opportunity to travel on Sunday in each direction, to and from home.



**THANKS TO SPONSORS
AND VOLUNTEERS!**

It takes hard work, many volunteers and a lot of money to put on a race of this international calibre. The first challenge is to the eight-member board to raise funds through activities, sponsorships and donations.

Without a budget there would be no race. We thank our loyal supporters from the business and private sectors who supply cash and in-kind donations to make the race possible each year, and humbly seek their continued support.

Hundreds of hours of planning and work go into the Challenge. Hundreds of volunteers help with the actual running of the race, including the tireless veterinarians and race marshals who are critical to the race. Most race officials look forward to four sleepless days and nights during race week!

Trail crews scout, punch, clear and groom hundreds of kilometres of trail. Still other volunteers organize and crew the mass start and finish lines, race checkpoints and road safety crossings.

Without all of these people, who often go unacknowledged and under-appreciated, the dog teams and mushers would have no race to run.

Photos in this brochure by Gill Gracie.

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**Call or drop by to get information,
or just for a visit!**



**CANADIAN
CHALLENGE**

**SLED DOG RACE
FEB 20-25, 2012**

PRINCE ALBERT-LA RONGE-NORTH

**12-DOG RACE 517 KM
8-DOG RACE 320 KM
JUNIOR RACE 117 KM
OPEN RACE 117 KM**



WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

The **Canadian Challenge Sled Dog Race** is a 12-dog continuous mid distance race held in Saskatchewan. The race follows a route similar to old sled dog and freight trails used for years by trappers, the North West Mounted Police and the First Nations community to travel between Prince Albert and the north.

An added highlight is the **8 dog race**, which runs between Prince Albert and La Ronge in conjunction with the 12 dog race.

In 2007 the **Junior Canadian Challenge** ran for the first time. The Junior race is designed to encourage the sport of mushing among our younger residents (17 and under).

In 2010 we added an Open category 117-km race, for those wanting a good day race.

The Canadian Challenge races are sponsored by the Gateway North Sled Dog Race Association, a non-profit organization formed in 1994 to promote traditional sled dog racing in Saskatchewan.

Over the years, the Challenge has grown to recognition as a world class-sporting event. As the longest all-Canadian sled dog race, it has attracted teams from across Canada, the United States, Australia, Germany, Serbia and Belgium.



HISTORY OF THE FREIGHT TRAILS

The race route parallels the earliest known transportation corridor in central Saskatchewan. This early corridor was a vital link between the northern and southern communities in the province.

The haul trails were developed in the late 1800s as the natural resources of the north became important. They ran from Prince Albert to Waskesiu (now in Prince Albert National Park), through Montreal Lake, Candle Lake and on to La Ronge.

Sleighs in winter, and to a lesser extent wagons in summer, carried manufactured goods northward while bringing fish and furs south. The freight trails were also used to supply provisions to logging camps.

Freighters travelled in steady numbers - sometimes as caravans (or 'swings') - resting at overnight stopping places established at roughly 20 mile intervals along the way.

One of the largest stopping places was "the Forks" on Mud Creek, at the north end of Shady Lake where the Montreal Lake trail was crossed by a western trail to Big River.

In 1914 a new Prince Albert-Montreal Lake freight trail was located east of the third meridian. This new road crippled the Forks, taking away about 90% of its freighting business during its first winter of operation.

As all-weather roads and paved highways were built, the freight trails eventually became less important. The new roads paralleled the old trails, or in some cases, were built directly on top of them.

One of the freight trails ran through the area which later became Prince Albert National Park. Today, 27 kilometres of the trail is maintained by Parks Canada as a hiking, cycling and cross-country ski trail.