

# NDC Thunder Bay Athlete Interest Article: “Altitude Training” By: Evan Palmer-Charrette



Currently NDC Thunder Bay is in Canmore, Alberta for an “Alignment Camp” with all other branches of high performance skiing through CCC in Canada. The main focus of the camp is to spend a large portion of time training at high altitude. Canmore sits at roughly 1300 meters above sea level, which is a significant difference from Thunder Bay. However for a handful of workouts during the camp we have driven up to train at much higher elevations reaching as high as 2400 meters.

Training at such high altitudes comes with many benefits if done properly. One of the best perks of being up high training around Canmore is, of course, the scenery. It’s hard to have a bad workout while gazing at mountain scenery. Training at altitude gives you an improved physiological response (more bang for your buck!). While up at higher elevations your body produces more hemoglobin, the protein in our red blood cells that

transports oxygen. As cross country skiers this is the goal of over 80% of our training. Having higher hemoglobin levels allows us to push ourselves harder, for a longer time. You may be asking yourself why not stay at as high an altitude as we can for the whole camp? Well NDC is following the “yoyo” style training approach. It allows us to reap the benefits of training at higher altitudes, while also gaining the benefits of resting and recovering at lower elevations to do it better all over again the next day.

As brilliant as it sounds there are also many risks. Your body may not start feeling thirsty but while training up high you lose more fluid through your lungs and skin without sweating as much to remind you to keep hydrated. It is also essential to train at a slower pace than you’re used to at a lower altitude like Thunder Bay. It is easy to get caught up in a group at a camp like this and train at a pace that may “feel” normal but can actually be substantially harder (higher heart rate) than you expect. Pushing it too much at altitude can quickly lead to prolonged fatigue or sickness. It’s best to keep a close eye on your pace, stay hydrated, eat a lot, but most importantly have a great time and enjoy the views!

P.S. - see the following pages for pictures!



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*Running along the Alberta BC boarder*



*Taking a drink break during a long run*

