

Riding on dog power in north Durham

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By [Jeff Hayward](#)

BROCK -- It wasn't the smoothest ride, but it was exhilarating.

The Times-Journal was invited by the Region to experience a dog sled ride, as Brock Township prepares for its annual Cannington Dog Sled Races this weekend. But this wasn't just any dog sled ride; these canines were built for speed, said Ken Davis of the Jamaica Dogsled Team, on hand to provide the experience. The racing dogs, obviously eager to run after emerging from a trailer, go "full-out", said Mr. Davis. "We train them to go as fast as they can."

After this reporter sat in a padded 'carriage' with the dogsled team's Damion Robb taking his position at the back of the sled to direct the dogs, a helper at the front of the pack let go of the reins, jolting the rider as the energized canines shot forward.

Holding a video camera to capture the experience and staying on the sled proved to be a bit of a challenge as there were no seat belts on this rig. The dog pack sometimes zigged and zagged across ruts in the snow on frozen Lake Simcoe, with snow shrapnel kicked up onto the face of the reporter. After only a short time the starting point, being Beaverton Harbour, seemed miles away while ice fishing huts dotted the horizon another mile or so north from where the ride ended. "Easy, easy," bellowed Mr. Robb, bringing the dogs to a halt.

While the Jamaica dogsled team doesn't usually offer rides to the public (they made an exception for the media Feb. 16), they can be seen competing in Cannington this weekend during the annual races, according to www.canningtondogsledraces.com. The website notes Mr. Robb will be racing in the six-dog as well as the four-dog class, "which will give everyone the opportunity to see why this is one Jamaican who loves the snow."

Kerri King, tourism manager for the Region, was also on hand that day to take a ride. "Typically we don't do dog sled races like this on (Lake) Simcoe, but this weekend (during the event) we will have dog sled races for families where you can take your kids for a short ride for a taste of what it's like to be on a dog sled," said Ms. King.

Also showcased Feb. 16 was Metis culture, maple syrup production, and ice fishing. "We offer some of the best ice fishing on Lake Simcoe," said Brock Mayor Larry O'Connor, noting the Sunderland Maple Syrup Festival is in March. "We get about 3,000 people that go ice fishing right out of this port every winter ... our Cannington festival and dog sled races are averaging 3,000 to 5,000 people every year."



Celia Klemenz / Metroland

BEAVERTON -- Teams of dogs raced across Lake Simcoe pulling sleds driven by Ken Davis, left, and Damion Robb, of the Jamaican Dogsled Team. The dogsledding was part of an event, in Beaverton on Feb. 16, to showcase Metis culture through a traditional Metis shore lunch, ice fishing and a demonstration of maple syrup production. February 16, 2010

Ms. King noted the dog sledding event on Feb. 20 and 21 also features ice sculptures, horse/carriage rides, free hot apple cider and pancake breakfasts. The site notes more than 70 dog sled teams from across North America will be competing for a \$10,000 purse.

For more information, visit www.canningtondogsledraces.com.