

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Lenny Valjas and Emily Nishikawa claim the first Gold Medals at the 93rd Canadian Cross-Country Ski Championships, in Gatineau

Race action continues tomorrow, with the 2nd day of the Pursuit Race.

Gatineau, Quebec: Today was the first day of action at the Nakkertok Nordic Ski Centre and National Team veterans Lenny Valjas of Toronto and Emily Nishikawa of Whitehorse came out on top in the senior, classic style competitions.

Lenny, a double Olympian, with 7 World Cup podiums to his name, was in a hard-fought battle with junior racer, Remi Drolet of Roseland, B.C., for much of the race. It was the more experienced Valjas who prevailed over the final few kilometres. Remi, who was 7th at this year's World Junior Championships, finished as the top Junior competitor.

Filling out the senior podium on the men's side, was Bob Thompson of Woodstock, Ontario, 15 seconds back of Valjas. He was followed by young, local star Antoine Cyr of Gatineau, only a little over a second later, in bronze position.

Lenny Valjas: "Today was great. It is inspiring to see all the young skiers out here racing, as I head into my final World Cup races in Quebec City. Remi made me push hard today, you have to be on your "A" game to beat him. He is the future and I am happy to see the young guys nipping at my heels".

Claiming silver in the junior race was Sam Hendry of Canmore and again it was a local skier, Ottawa's Pierre Grall-Johnson that was just a second back from a silver medal.

Pierre Grall-Johnson: "The race went super well today. It was really fun to be back on my home course. I used the corners and tricky spots to my advantage."

In the women's race it was Emily Nishikawa and Dahria Beatty of Whitehorse that came away with gold and silver, ahead of local favourite Chelsea's Katherine Stewart-Jones, who took bronze.

Emily Nishikawa: "It's fun to be racing back here, great course, great organization. It is inspiring to see all the young athletes that are competing".

Katherine Stewart-Jones: "I love this course, a lot of sharp turns. I started really hard as I knew it would be a fast race and ran out of energy a bit at the end, but I am happy how it went".

In the Junior Women's competition Anne-Marie Petitclerc of Mont Ste. Anne had a strong race, finishing 56 seconds ahead of her next rival, Amanda Thompson of Whitehorse. There was another third place for a local skier, as Tove Halvorsen of Chelsea claimed bronze.

There were also two age classes of younger skiers competing, with Ottawa's Luke Allan placing second in a race dominated by Canmore's Xavier McKeever. Xavier is the son of Canadian Olympian's Milaine Theriault and Robin McKeever and the nephew of Paralympic star, Brian McKeever.

Next up on Thursday are the skate, pursuit races, where the winners from today start first and the rest of the skier follow, based on their time behind. The first skier to cross the finish line wins.

- The Men's race starts at 10:05 on Thursday
- The Women's race starts at 11:00

Complete results can be found at: <https://zone4.ca/event/9216c3d0-0e24-11e9-96ea-0a45a88024d8/>

- 30 -

About

Évènements Nordiques Gatineau Nordic Events (ÉNGNE), the Gatineau World Cup stop organizers for the 2016 Ski Tour Canada, is the organization behind the 2019 Canadian Ski Championships.

ÉNGNE is a non-profit organisation incorporated in the province of Quebec founded by local cross-country enthusiasts from three clubs and a race organisation (Chelsea Nordiq Ski Club, Nakkertok Nordic, Club Skinouk and the Gatineau Loppet are equal partners).

ÉNGNE has as its Mission to organize, promote and host major events and competitions in the field of cross-country skiing and other related sports activities aimed at offering an enriching experience for all participants and fans, promoting the practice of amateur and competitive sport and a healthy lifestyle, as well as broadening the reputation of Gatineau and the National Capital Region as a sports and cultural destination of choice.