



# CANADIAN OUTRIGGER HALL OF FAME

## Len Morris Jr.



### Summary

**Geronimo! "It is a way of life!"** What better way to recognize the achievements and history of Len Morris Jr. and the Geronimo Canoe Club. [01] As a Masters 40+ paddler, Len Jr. has already realized a remarkable set of accomplishments that will only continue with each passing year. This is long overdue recognition not only for Len Jr., but also for the unheralded achievements of 4 generations of the Geronimo Canoe Club.

### Early Career

This story begins in the early 1970s. Geronimo Canoe Club of Tsartlip First Nation from Brentwood Bay is an amazing story of local athletic achievement, against incredible odds. Geronimo Canoe Club was established in the early 1970s by Ivan (once a world-class rower) and Madeline (Henry) Morris of the Tsartlip First Nation for their 4 sons (Wayne, Leonard, Howard, and Bruce) and 2 daughters (Sylvia and Ivy) to compete in the traditional war canoe races held by First Nations up Vancouver Island and on the BC Lower Mainland. [02] Currently 4 generations are part of the club. Geronimo Canoe Club was formed by 10 men from the Saanich area. Wayne Morris Sr., Leonard Morris Sr., Howard Morris, Bruce Morris Sr., Russell Henry, Thomas Henry, Harvey Henry, Curtis Sam, Alec Sam, and Vernon Tom were the men who paddled with Geronimo Canoe Club in the first year in the early 1970s. They have been a paddling juggernaut on the Coast Salish canoe race circuit since the early 1970s. Geronimo Canoe Club competed in events all over the world. They raced in the 6.5-hour Molokai Hoe race, went to New Zealand to race against traditional canoes from New Zealand in 1990, and they also competed in the 1992 Sacramento IPCF / IVF World Sprints with Leonard Morris Sr. (Len Jr.'s father) as part of that team. [03] Every summer, Indigenous canoe clubs from around the Salish Sea gather in coastal and inland communities to compete in canoe races. Geronimo Canoe Club attracts paddlers from many families on the Saanich Peninsula. [04] However, their crews have primarily come from the Morris family. In recent years it has been increasingly prohibitive to race because of the high cost of travelling (ferry, gas, camping and food) with teams of over 2 dozen people and large canoes. As a result, the number of canoe clubs and paddlers has suffered. Geronimo Canoe Club training relies on a lifetime of traditional padding in war canoes. [05] Len Jr. represents a continuation of this multi-generational paddling family with grandparents Ivan and Madeline (Henry) Morris, with father Leonard Morris Sr., with wife Ashley Morris and now son Jasper Morris and daughter Sakora Morris.

### Outrigger Canoeing Achievements

We have chosen to chronicle the Outrigger Canoeing Achievements of Len Jr. in 5 distinct time periods based on a timeline that showcases the progression of achievements by Len Jr. over the past 13 years.

**2010-2016:** Over the last 40+ years, the clubs mostly Tsartlip Nation members have been racing and competing internationally in outrigger canoe races, despite not owning an actual outrigger canoe until 2017. Instead, they would practice in traditional dugout cedar war canoes and borrow outrigger canoes for race days. Most of the 3rd generation of Geronimo Canoe Club members have only been paddling competitively in outrigger canoes since 2010. Geronimo Canoe Club would place 2nd in Open Men at 2011 CORA Distance Championships despite their canoe flipping. [06] Geronimo Canoe Club would place 6th in Open Men at 2012 CORA Distance Championships. [07] Geronimo Canoe Club would then place 1st in Open Men at 2013 and 2015 and 2016 CORA Distance Championships. [08] [09] [10] The 1st place showing at 2016 CORA Distance Championships, despite not owning an outrigger canoe and having to borrow one for the race from friends in Washington State, qualified the Geronimo Canoe Club crew (George Horne, John Sampson, Joe Seward, Gus Morris, Donald White, Len Jr.) as the Team Canada Open Men crew for 2017 Tahiti IVF World Distance. [11] In addition to the team win, Len Jr. won the Open Men solo race, and with that win, qualified for Open Men V1 at 2017 Tahiti IVF World Distance. [12]

**2017:** Len Jr. may very well have won the Open Men division in every Pacific Northwest OC1 race that he competed in 2017. [13] At the PNWORCA 2017 Small-Boat Winter Series Championships in Seattle, Len Jr. would finish 1st place OC overall against elite small-boat paddlers – with only a handful of surfski paddlers the likes of Greg Barton finishing ahead of him. [14] At the 2017 Tahiti IVF

World Distance, Geronimo Canoe Club had the misfortune of having their OC6 break in half as the waves were too big for the crew to get the water out fast enough. Len Jr. finished 13th out of 26 paddlers in V1 Men Open. [15] Geronimo Canoe Club would place 1st in Open Men at 2017 CORA Distance Championships for their 4th National Outrigger Canoe Title, shortly after returning from Papeete. [16] Geronimo Canoe Club members conducted fundraising efforts to finance the trip to Tahiti. [17] Corporate sponsorship secured during the funding drive of 2017 helped the team get their first Puakea - Malolo unlimited outrigger canoe.

**2019:** This was a pinnacle year for Len Jr., that concluded with a remarkable achievement at Molokai Hoe 2019. Gordon Martinez [19], head coach of Kikaha O Ke Kai [03], had a vision of a Masters 40+ Pacific Northwest crew that would be competitive in the outrigger canoe racing Super Bowl that is Molokai Hoe. [20] Gordon assembled a stellar crew named "Kikaha Northwest" of nine rock-star paddlers from six different clubs that included Bobby Fontes (WA), Jacob Murray (WA), Gordon Martinez (WA), Jono Saunders - steersman (WA), Matt Taufasau (WA), Eric Scharffenberg (OR), Taz Lee (OR), Ashley James (BC), and Len Morris Jr. (BC). The crew spoke highly of the great experience coming and working together with men from different clubs. Gordon attributed one key to their success in that everyone had respect for each other as equals, no chip on the shoulder, just pure trust, and hard work together. During their crew training, everyone made sacrifices to travel as far from Oregon, Washington, up to Canada. [21] The result was Kikaha Northwest finishing 44th overall and taking Masters 40+ Silver. [22] Five members (George Horne, Joe Seward, Gus Morris, Jasper Morris, Len Jr.) of Geronimo Canoe Club had earned the Team Canada Open Men crew for 2019 Australia IVF World Distance. [23] This Team Canada Open Men crew would place 12th overall in the world. Jasper Morris would place would place 6th overall in the world in V1 Junior Men. [24] Len Jr. had the plug pop out of his canoe and despite his canoe filling with water, he still would place 11th overall in the world in V1 Open Men. [25]

**2020:** At the Alberta Team Canada qualifying event, Geronimo Canoe Club qualified as a pre-determined crew for the 2020 Hilo IVF World Sprints. The COVID global pandemic forced the cancellation of the 2020 IVF event. [26]

**2022:** Six members of WSÁNEĆ Geronimo Canoe Club (Rose Seward, Jennea Seward, Joseph Seward 3rd (the 3rd) Sakora Morris, Jasper Morris, Len Jr.) would travel to Windsor, UK to compete on the international stage at the 2022 London IVF World Sprints. [27] At the Team Canada Sprints Trials held in Alberta, Len Jr. caught the flu a week before, yet still managed to paddle faster than most of the people he was competing against. Jasper Morris would race with Team Canada Open Men V12 500M, V6 500M, and V6 1500M crews. Jasper Morris would take Gold in Junior Men V1 500M. [28] Len Jr. would race with Team Canada Masters 40+ Men V12 500M, V6 500M, and V6 1000M crews. Len Jr. would take Bronze in Junior Men V1 500M. [29] This may be the first time that a Canadian father and son have both medaled in V1 at the same IVF World Sprints. [30] In December 2022, Len Jr. would travel to Brazil to race with a Canadian V6 crew that would take Gold in Masters Mixed at the 90KM Vibe Ilhabela attended by 32 crews. [31]

## Coach-Builder Achievements

Through-out all the online articles and interviews with the WSÁNEĆ paddlers, there are several themes that resonate – community, family, culture, traditions. [33] In the extremely competitive outrigger canoeing field, WSÁNEĆ community members have been ranked as some of the best paddlers in the world for years. Even without the proper equipment, the club's members have achieved incredible rankings worldwide. Their competitors include some of the fastest and strongest paddlers in the world from places like Polynesia, Australia, and Hawaii who race in top-of-the-line-equipment, courtesy of sponsors like Red Bull and Shell Petroleum. In contrast to the Tahitians and Polynesians who get full sponsorships, the Geronimo Canoe Clubs fundraising efforts to cover the costs of the trip, all the while managing their rigorous training schedules, resembles a 50/50 draw from community donors. Since childhood, the core group of the Geronimo Canoe Club have paddled and competed in their traditional war canoes. The crew members speak of their very early days, sitting on a log in the water with a stick for a paddle, which earned them the name the "beach kids", and then a steady progression to outrigger canoe racing. [34] They typically train in the spring and summer, taking part in events among other Island, BC Lower Mainland, and Washington State First Nations communities. [35] Even in the winter, they spend time on the water to stay on top of their game.

In a 2016 interview with CBC, Len Jr. speaks on how winning the qualifying event for Open Men V1 at 2017 Tahiti IVF World Distance was the culmination of generations of paddling. [36] Morris found his love for canoeing when his grandparents, Madeline and Ivan established the Geronimo Canoe Club. The grandparents started the club, and then the parents took it over, and now it is the turn for the 3rd generation to keep the tradition running. [37] And years later, Len Jr. is passing on the same skills to his own son Jasper Morris and daughter Sakora Morris.

In the words of Geronimo Canoe Club steersperson George Horne, *"Coming from a paddling family has embedded the love for the water in my soul."*

## References

Note	Article	Link
[01]	It's A Way Of Life	<a href="https://adamolsen.ca/2019/06/geronimo-its-a-way-of-life/">https://adamolsen.ca/2019/06/geronimo-its-a-way-of-life/</a>
[02]	Geronimo Canoe Club History	<a href="https://www.angelfire.com/hi4/Geronimo/Geronimo.html">https://www.angelfire.com/hi4/Geronimo/Geronimo.html</a>
[03]	1992 Sacramento IVF World Sprints	<a href="https://www.canadianoutrigger.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/IVF-Race-Results-1992-Sacramento.pdf">https://www.canadianoutrigger.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/IVF-Race-Results-1992-Sacramento.pdf</a>
[04]	Celebrating Indigenous History Month	<a href="https://sportforlife.ca/blog/celebrating-indigenous-history-month/">https://sportforlife.ca/blog/celebrating-indigenous-history-month/</a>
[05]	2021 Paddle 4 Pacific Official Launch & Host Family, Geronimo Canoe Club	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4nehh474jM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4nehh474jM</a>
[06]	2011 CORA Distance Championships	<a href="http://www.jerichooutrigger.com/races2011/CdnsOC6.html">http://www.jerichooutrigger.com/races2011/CdnsOC6.html</a>
[07]	2012 CORA Distance Championships	<a href="http://www.jerichooutrigger.com/races2012/CdnsOC6.html">http://www.jerichooutrigger.com/races2012/CdnsOC6.html</a>
[08]	2013 CORA Distance Championships	<a href="https://www.canadianoutrigger.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/2013-Nationals-Irons_2013.pdf">https://www.canadianoutrigger.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/2013-Nationals-Irons_2013.pdf</a>
[09]	2015 CORA Distance Championships	<a href="https://www.canadianoutrigger.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/2015-Canadian-Iron-Champs-OC-6-RESULTS.pdf">https://www.canadianoutrigger.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/2015-Canadian-Iron-Champs-OC-6-RESULTS.pdf</a>
[10]	2016 CORA Distance Championships	<a href="https://www.canadianoutrigger.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/2016HSIResults.pdf">https://www.canadianoutrigger.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/2016HSIResults.pdf</a>
[11]	2016 CORA Distance Championships	<a href="https://spiritofthewestcoast.com/blogs/news/the-outrigger-canoe-championship-was-won-by-team-that-practises-in-a-war-canoe">https://spiritofthewestcoast.com/blogs/news/the-outrigger-canoe-championship-was-won-by-team-that-practises-in-a-war-canoe</a>
[12]	2016 CORA Distance Championships	<a href="https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/outrigger-canoe-championship-1.3728783">https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/outrigger-canoe-championship-1.3728783</a>
[13]	2017 FCRCC #5 Winter Series	<a href="http://www.jerichooutrigger.com/races2017/pnworca5.html">http://www.jerichooutrigger.com/races2017/pnworca5.html</a>
[14]	2017 Sand Point #7 Winter Series	<a href="http://www.jerichooutrigger.com/races2017/pnworca7.html">http://www.jerichooutrigger.com/races2017/pnworca7.html</a>
[15]	2017 Tahiti IVF Distance Results	<a href="http://www.ivfiv.org/2017-tahiti---distance.html">http://www.ivfiv.org/2017-tahiti---distance.html</a>
[16]	2022 BC First Nation Father-Son Duo	<a href="https://www.cheknews.ca/bc-first-nation-father-son-duo-set-to-compete-in-world-class-competition-in-australia-567326/">https://www.cheknews.ca/bc-first-nation-father-son-duo-set-to-compete-in-world-class-competition-in-australia-567326/</a>
[17]	2017 CORA Distance Championships	<a href="http://www.jerichooutrigger.com/races2017/canadians.html">http://www.jerichooutrigger.com/races2017/canadians.html</a>
[19]	Kikaha O Ke Kai Kokua Gordon	<a href="http://kikaha.com/kokuagordon/">http://kikaha.com/kokuagordon/</a>
[20]	Cascadia – Paddlers Without Borders	<a href="https://www.canadianoutrigger.ca/cascadia-paddlers-without-borders/">https://www.canadianoutrigger.ca/cascadia-paddlers-without-borders/</a>
[21]	Molokai Hoe 2019 Kikaha Northwest Race Start	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qwn6E7nhxsk">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qwn6E7nhxsk</a>
[22]	Molokai Hoe 2019 Results	<a href="https://pserevents.com/events/1109/results">https://pserevents.com/events/1109/results</a>
[23]	2019 Comox Small-Boat Race	<a href="https://www.webscorer.com/racealldetails?raceid=184585&amp;topn=3">https://www.webscorer.com/racealldetails?raceid=184585&amp;topn=3</a>
[24]	2019 Geronimo Canoe Club Australia Fundraising	<a href="https://www.vicnews.com/community/tsartlip-canoe-team-pulls-for-international-glory-in-australia/">https://www.vicnews.com/community/tsartlip-canoe-team-pulls-for-international-glory-in-australia/</a>
[25]	2019 Australia IVF Distance Results	<a href="http://www.ivfiv.org/2019-australia---distance.html">http://www.ivfiv.org/2019-australia---distance.html</a>
[26]	2020 Hilo IVF World Sprints	<a href="http://www.ivfiv.org/2020-world-sprint-elite--club.html">http://www.ivfiv.org/2020-world-sprint-elite--club.html</a>
[27]	2022 WSÁNEĆ Paddlers to UK	<a href="https://wsanec.com/local-w%CC%B1sanec-paddlers-to-represent-canada-in-the-uk-this-summer/">https://wsanec.com/local-w%CC%B1sanec-paddlers-to-represent-canada-in-the-uk-this-summer/</a>
[28]	2022 BC First Nation Father-Son Win Medals	<a href="https://tsartlip.com/jasper-len-morris-win-gold-bronze-at-2022-world-sprint-championships/">https://tsartlip.com/jasper-len-morris-win-gold-bronze-at-2022-world-sprint-championships/</a>
[29]	2022 BC First Nation Father-Son Win Medals	<a href="https://vancouverisland.ctvnews.ca/vancouver-island-father-and-son-win-medals-at-world-paddling-competition-1.6053824">https://vancouverisland.ctvnews.ca/vancouver-island-father-and-son-win-medals-at-world-paddling-competition-1.6053824</a>
[30]	2022 London IVF Sprints Results	<a href="http://www.ivfiv.org/uploads/1/3/7/9/137911945/results_-_all_days.pdf">http://www.ivfiv.org/uploads/1/3/7/9/137911945/results_-_all_days.pdf</a>
[31]	VIBE 2022: Volta De Ilhabela De Canoa Havaiana	<a href="https://www.tamoiosnews.com.br/noticias/vibe-2022-volta-de-ilhabela-de-canoa-havaiana-acontece-neste-fim-de-semana/">https://www.tamoiosnews.com.br/noticias/vibe-2022-volta-de-ilhabela-de-canoa-havaiana-acontece-neste-fim-de-semana/</a>
[32]	VIBE 2022 – Volta De Canoa Havaiana	<a href="https://www.guiavaledoparaiba.com.br/eventos/esporte/vibe-2022-volta-de-ilhabela-de-canoa-havaiana">https://www.guiavaledoparaiba.com.br/eventos/esporte/vibe-2022-volta-de-ilhabela-de-canoa-havaiana</a>
[33]	Geronimo – The Team	<a href="https://www.geronimocanooclub.com/the-team">https://www.geronimocanooclub.com/the-team</a>
[34]	Len Morris Jr. Place 6th In World	<a href="https://wsanec.com/kid-from-the-rez-places-6th-in-the-world/">https://wsanec.com/kid-from-the-rez-places-6th-in-the-world/</a>
[35]	2017 Tahiti IVF Distance Training	<a href="https://www.peninsulanewsreview.com/news/central-saanichs-tsartlip-canoe-team-preparing-for-2017-tahiti-event/">https://www.peninsulanewsreview.com/news/central-saanichs-tsartlip-canoe-team-preparing-for-2017-tahiti-event/</a>
[36]	2017 From War Canoe to Outrigger Racer	<a href="https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-48-on-the-island/clip/15929252-from-war-canoe-outrigger-racer-well-speak">https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-48-on-the-island/clip/15929252-from-war-canoe-outrigger-racer-well-speak</a>
[37]	Len Morris Jr. Team Rider For Hana Hou Paddlesports	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1719905601456751">https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1719905601456751</a>