

Canada Parks Day

By OSPS director Sheila White

July 20, 2013, will be remembered as a banner day for celebrating the Manning Park historical trails as well as welcoming the 16,000-hectare recreation area abutting Manning Park north to full Class A park status. This has been an objective of the OSPS for many years, and it is good to see it finally declared officially.

Keith Baric, the planning section head of BC Parks Okanagan, was MC. He spoke of his pleasure at seeing those who travelled to attend the occasion, and of other events being held today in Manning Park. He was delighted that Peter, John and Alyson Hatfield were present to join in honouring the pioneer trail work of their father, Harley Hatfield.

Keith said the trails were in a land of fives:

5 major streams: the Podunk, Skaist, Snass, Upper Sawoqua and the Upper Tulameen

5 historic trails: Blackeye's, Dewdney, HBC Brigade Trail, Hope and the Whatcom

5 major parks: Outram, Dewdney, Snass, Tulameen and Skaist

5 points of entry from main roads (Highways 3 and 5)

and stimulation to all five senses which "would constantly be aroused by the sights, sounds, smells and by the very feel of the land which brings peace and relaxation to mind and spirit" (quoted from the OSPS historical trails briefing to the provincial government).

Today the Cascade wilderness component of Manning Provincial Park protects a land area that ranges from 366 metres to over 2,286 metres above sea level. There are old-growth forested valleys, lush alpine meadows and expansive wetlands which remain relatively free from human interference; wildlife such as pica and mountain beavers, herds of elk and deer, elusive wolverines, gray wolves and even grizzlies.

Keith reminded everyone that the area we are speaking of today contains the traditional lands of at least 17 First Nations. Some of those nations include the Stolo,

Nlaka'pamux and Okanagan. Many of the historic trails we have come to know within Manning Park were used by First Peoples dating back thousands of years.

By contrast, the Hudson's Bay Brigade Trail was developed in the 1850s to serve the gold miners heading from Hope through the Cascades on their way to the Cariboo. The trails remained largely unused and almost forgotten for 100 years.

Keith Baric called on several speakers who had themselves worked with Harley Hatfield in the early days of trail discovery and openings: Randy Manuel, Ray Travers, Dennis O'Gorman, Robert Goodfellow (whose grandfather was the first white man to walk all the trails) and Bill Johnston.

They mentioned and praised the special contributions of others: the late Bob Harris, Victor Wilson and Eric Jacobson. Each of them had assisted Harley and enabled the "historic trails" dream to become a reality.

Bill Johnston recalled his time as a teenager when he had assisted in early trail work and whose love of hiking, camping and mountains became life long. He has for many years been the Cascade Committee head for the OSPS. Randy Manuel, a historian like Harley and the late Bill Barlee, were other OSPS members. Randy did the maps and drawings for the OSPS-produced "Old Pack Trails" booklet – a lovely, authentic record of the historic trails area. The publication continues to please today, as sales mount.

The OSPS has been able, over the past 40 years, to assist in trail development and recognition by: the Old Pack Trails booklet; lobbying the provincial government for trail recognition and protection; and by continuous financial support.

Today, work is being carried out by Kelley Cook of Princeton and her crew in co-operation with BC Parks and funding assistance from the OSPS. As more improvements are made at campsites and further trail work, so use of the Cascade Historic Trails increases – a wonderful tribute to the hopes and dreams of the early enthusiasts.

Interpretive signs were shown to the Parks Day gathering. An excellent lunch organized by Kelley Cook, Mary Mitchell of the Friends of Manning Park and members of the Vermillion Forks Field Naturalists was served.

Following that, the group assembled again on Blackwall Mountain for the unveiling of a bronze plaque featuring the historic trails and naming Harley Hatfield for his original work.

The drive up Blackwall is interesting and the views from the peak were on that sunny day, fabulous. All in all, it was a day of great memories and rejoicing in the shared success of achievement for posterity.