

OSPS NEWSLETTER

OKANAGAN SIMILKAMEEN PARKS SOCIETY

Winter
2008

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Treasures of the Tulameen - Past and Present

by Kelly Cook – Special to The Spotlight
July 30, 2008

These trails were preserved through the efforts and foresight of many people and organizations. Throughout the 1960s and 70s a group of dedicated and enthusiastic people from the Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society and the Okanagan Historical Society located and mapped these important routes.

Subsequently they managed to convince the government that in order to protect the trails they must be declared Heritage Trails.

Clearing of these trails was done with the help of many Boy Scouts. Some local



Podunk Davis with his camera, used to travel the Hudson Bay Trail.

Boy Scouts were Terry Wright and Rick Jacobson who traveled sixty miles on foot from Jacobson Lake to Hope in August of 1971.

Locating and clearing the trails was a laborious endeavor as described by Eric Jacobson of Princeton.

He spent many years searching the area with his good friend Harley Hatfield of Penticton along with many other volunteers from various parts of the province.

Harley even went as far as England to gather information from the Hudson Bay Company Archives.

Harley Hatfield was rewarded for his dedication to the locating and re-marking of these historic trails with a Heritage Canada Award.

WANTED

Email addresses for all who would like to receive the February OSPS Newsletter via that medium. Please notify us at anglerem@telus.net or (hopefully) when you renew your 2009 membership. We can save both expensive postage and paper.

Much news of the Tulameen Trails Celebration. The OSPS and present Director Bill Johnston were responsible for historic trails protection by having Linear Park designation initiated.

The BC Environmental Network AGM is September unfortunately was only sparsely attended. We hope the BCEN will again become an important umbrella organization

of particular help to small, rural groups who find themselves with a good cause but few resources.

The keynote speech was by UBC Professor Bill Rees describing a dire world situation. See "notes" in this issue.

Local environmental concerns are continually monitored by OSPS attendance at many meetings by they LRMP, Trail, Forest Company cut plans, Regional District Planning, etc. The protection of the Dominion radio Astrophysical Observatory (DRAO) at White Lake, just south of Penticton is of special interest. OSPS has long been a champion for its security.

Final recommendations for Registration, Licensing and Management of Off-Road Vehicles in BC are presently being considered. OSPS believes trails should be open to all (people) but not to all conveyances (motorized) proper identification (licence) and insurance are both needed. Please write Premier Campbell or Minister Barry Perner if you have comments on this matter.

The Watershed Sentinel is an interesting little publication now seeking new subscribers. Their address is – PO Box 1270 Comox, BC V9M 7Z8 or circ@watershedsentinel.ca. We support this magazine too.

Please used the enclosed membership form on page 4 to help us carry out our mission.

Princeton Residents Celebrate the Reopening of the Hudson's Bay Trail

BY DIERRA MAYNARD

Spotlight Reporter - July 30, 2008

Saturday the 26th of July was special to our community in more ways than one. It was a weekend for celebrating BC's 150th birthday and a weekend for celebrating our local heritage.

Thirty nine kilometers Southwest of Tulameen on River Road or one heck of a lot further on the Lawless Creek route cars, trucks, a bus, hikers and horses all arrived at Jacobson Lake with a united goal.

The ceremony began shortly before noon as a large group of riders carrying the flags of our ancestors, our province and our country rode in.

Some of the riders came from as far away as Fort Langley on horse while others joined the historical trek at predetermined locations along the way. They were leading pack-horses. They had been on the trail for nine days. It was fantastic.



The Back Country Riders rode in to Jacobson Lake around noon Saturday after leaving Fort Langley last week. It took the riders nine days to complete the ride through the mountains to reopen the old Hudson's Bay Trail, known as the Brigade Trail. Riders from Princeton came in from the Tulameen area.



Chamber of Commerce manager, Lori Thomas, Rika Rubisat, Kelley Cook, Councillor Maria Sadegur, Jon Bartlett, Nadine McEwan, Cheryl Winters and Kailee Smith standing in front of the new kiosk that was erected at the Jacobson Lake tourist information area.

All trails were originally native. Blackeyes was the first Native to lead white settlers inland. "In 1846 Alexander Caulfield, was sent by the HBC to find an all-British route through the mountains to Fort Kamloops," stated Kelley.

The sign recognizes the men who led and preserved the trails.

The Royal Engineers, who cleared and located the trails; Lt. Palmer, the Royal Engineer, who surveyed and reported detailed descriptive in his reports of the area; Podunk Davis, "trapper, miner, distiller and hero who knew the area better than anyone," stated Cook, and rescued Nurse

Warburton after she was lost in the wilderness; Harley Hatfield, the most dedicated and some say obsessed with the preservation of the trails who lobbied tirelessly for their preservation; the Jacobson family; the Rice family; and Robert Harris, engineer, meticulous map maker and note taker who, not only designed and erected several bridges in Vancouver; the Granville, Second Narrows, Oak Street and Port Mann, but mapped much of Southwestern British Columbia.

Family members of the Jacobson, Rice, and Hatfield were present for the official trail opening as well as, many other important families to the area.

The hike in to Palmers Pond was one of the highlights of the day and "the looks of wonder were priceless," stated Cook. "Three quarters of the bus travelers came to do the hike and it did not disappoint. It is just beautiful in there... a must see."

Trail Offers Fitness, Fun and Benefits

BY ROXANNA MARON
Summerland Review - Oct. 9, 2008

Families, avid hikers and many others are discovering the beauty along the many stretches of the Trans Canada Trail – including Summerland’s portion.

Marilyn Hansen, president of the Summerland Trans Canada Trail society, says while more people are discovering the Trans Canada Trail in this community. She encourages the locals to experience the trail as well.

“It’s really good for fitness,” she adds. “We already have international groups who come through and stay here because of the trail.”

Much time and money has gone into the trail and there is still work to be done. Hansen says the biggest issue to rectify is the trail’s surface.

“Our major problem is that the surface isn’t very good in many places,” she notes.

Hansen says they also have one more bridge along Summerland’s trail portion to complete. However, it is a big project that requires a lot of funding, which is always a challenge to obtain.

She notes that maintaining the trail is expensive in itself. This summer alone, the society had to get heavy equipment in to remove debris left behind from two landslides.

The slides happened west of Faulder on a section of the trail. Hansen is afraid these aren’t the last slides they may see in this area.

“It could be a continuing problem,” she adds.

Hansen says since portions of the trail hold an historical past, the society is working with Summerland Museum’s Sheril Foster in getting historical signs put up along the trail.



She notes that in order to get the trail up to the level it should be and to eventually complete it, the society needs more clubs, organizations and individuals to get involved with fundraising efforts.

By working together, Hansen believes the trail could become economically beneficial to Summerland.

“It will definitely be a tourism generator,” she explains.

Summerland’s stretch of trail begins at Fenwick Road and winds along to the Summerland Rodeo Grounds. It is about a 3.8 km walk. The trail then extends to Faulder and on to 1.5 km east of Osprey Lake where it joins Princeton’s section of the Trans Canada Trail. People are encouraged to check out the map of the trail located on the left hand side of the entrance near the Rodeo Grounds. Hansen says Summerland is fortunate because the majority of its trail is along old rail beds or is on municipally owned lands.

She notes that the route would be perfect for a Trans Canada trail Challenge, similar to the one held this summer from Myra Canyon to Penticton.

Members of the Summerland Trans Canada

Trail Society helped organize the event in which over 500 people took part in the 80 km bicycle ride or hike. This was not a race but a personal effort for each registrant. The youngest participant to complete the challenge was eight years old.

Hansen says events like these are great because they not only give people a chance to see stunningly scenic areas along the trail, but the registration money goes back into Trans Canada Trail projects.

She would like to see a future challenge begin in Osprey Lake and end in Summerland. As with this summer’s challenge, people would have the option to bike, walk or ride their horse on the trail. “Our stretch is very beautiful,” notes Hansen.

Donations are always welcome for ongoing work and maintenance for the trail. Cheque or money orders can be made out to the Summerland Trans Canada Trail Society.

Donations can be sent to Geoff Solly at 6803 Nixon Road, Summerland, BC V0H 1Z9. Tax receipts are available upon donation.

For more information about the Summerland Trans Canada Trail Society or to become a volunteer with the group, please contact Marilyn Hansen at 250-494-9265.

MEMBERSHIP FORM Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society • Box 787, Summerland, B.C. VOH 1Z0

Name: _____ Phone: _____

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Email: _____ Postal Code: _____

Individual (\$10.00) _____ Family (\$15) _____ Organization (\$20) _____

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Please help support our continuing programs



The Denial Problem

Notes from a presentation by UBC Professor Dr. William Rees at the BC Environmental Network AGM, September 2008 – He is the inventor of the “Ecological Footprint” concept.

The world faces a catastrophes future unless we all live in a sustainable manner. So much has happened technologically that we have some to believe science will solve everything. We have, however, overdone the true capacity for sustainability globally.

Behavioral psychology is used to increase our appetite for more of everything. Market place sales, increased productivity, competition for new, more, better... all geared to increased consumption.

The sustainable future requires we learn to

curb our appetites, to live more modestly, to save fuel, energy and all resources.

There are 6.7 billion people on earth, but the style of living varied greatly. The USA has 4.7% of the population but uses over 20% of the energy; China has 12% of the population and uses just over 2% of the energy.

Oceans are hugely involved in the cycle of change. Arctic melting not only raises the sea level to endanger countless coastal communities but also release ice-held methane gas that is 20 times more powerful than greenhouse gas. So climate change is exacerbated.

Forests are host to many species, holding soil and retaining and filtering water supplies essential for fish and for domestic use. The erosion of soil is a dangerous precedent for all as it is a loss of land, the have for living.

Every empire and civilization in the history of the world has been brought down by government or by working against nature.

Technology has brought us many comforts and opportunities. We possess so much knowledge and have so many skills but we have not yet accepted the mindset to use our abilities to do things that make sense in the long term.

What we do or do not now to lessen our use of resources will have a profound affect on coming generations. A legacy of simpler living or of desperate discrepancies with dangerous chemical pollution of air, land and water.

Plan Globally – Think Locally – Act Personally

Why Doesn't BC Have Endangered Species Legislation?

Western Canada Wilderness Committee

Dear Friends:

It may come as no surprise to you but it's shocking nonetheless: British Columbia is one of only two provinces in Canada with no endangered species legislation.

Certainly, most British Columbians are very surprised to find out that our province has no such law. It is particularly surprising because BC is Canada's most biologi-

cally rich province, home to 76 percent of Canada's bird species and 41 percent of its orchid species. But from grizzly bears to spotted owls, the province's 1600 species at risk are left to fend for themselves.

The Wilderness Committee is calling for a stand-alone endangered species law that will include science-based listing and protection of critical habitat.

The future of BC's remarkable wildlife depends upon people like you – people who love nature and feel passionately that species, from bighorn sheep to the Vancouver Island marmot, are worth protecting.

Make your voice count! Take one minute to

visit saveourspecies.ca to sign a petition for a BC Endangered Species Law. The goal is to get 40,000 signatures by next spring.

Please write now, and encourage your friends, members and supporters to write as well. We can get endangered species legislation if thousands let the government know how we feel. We have already mailed this education report to several thousands of our members and supporters – now we are sending it to like-minded organizations like yours.

*Sincerely,
Gwen Barlee
Wilderness Committee Policy Director*

KVR Trail Being Allowed to Deteriorate *Penticton Western News – October 26, 2008*

On a recent bike trip from Penticton to midway and return on the KVR, a distance of 430 kilometres, I was dismayed and disappointed to see what is happening to this wonderful internationally known recreational biking and hiking trail.

It appears that only those areas which have park designation are protected and maintained to allow reasonably manageable non-motorized recreational use. The major part of the old railbed right-of-way, which I thought was a part of the "rail to trails" initiative, has been terribly degraded by logging and gravel trucks, ATVs, 4X4s and regular automobile use where they are able to negotiate it.

As this right-of-way was built to be a railbed and not a vehicle road, the vast majority of it is now exposed rock, soft sand, deep ruts, washboard, areas of fallen rock which have not been removed and deep puddles and ditches form water damage. These track conditions do not allow for an enjoyable recreational biking experience. My group met several thorough-bikers from Alaska and Europe who were as dismayed as we were and wondered what had happened to the bike trail described in the guide books. Long-distance biking enthusiasts do not expect a manicured trail but given the fact that the KVR has been publicized as a bike experience not to be missed because of the spectacular British Columbia scenery and terrain it passes through and that it is a former railroad grade, we expected to have at least minimal rough track and a majority of reasonable cycling particularly for loaded bikes.

One of the worst areas of trail was the about 35 km from Naramata to Chute Lake, a

spectacular scenic area above Okanagan Lake which travels through a tunnel and has unsurpassed views of Penticton, Naramata and Kelowna. This stretch of trail which in past years allowed only minimal motorized access is now completely accessible to motorized traffic except for about 10 km at the Penticton-Naramata end.

The railbed is in terrible shape with exposed rock, washboard and beach sand type conditions. Despite these conditions, I still saw advertising to bike and wine tasting in Naramata. This doesn't seem like a very good idea when you look at where you have to ride. Are the local wineries and tourism organizations aware of the railbed conditions? We asked local people why the condition of this part of the trail had deteriorated so much and they said it was due to no funds for maintenance and after the Okanagan Mountain Park fire in 2003, the Chute Lake logging road deteriorated a great deal and a logging contractor was not obliged to repair the road after completing their logging. The government then allowed all traffic onto the KVR to circumvent the deteriorated logging road.

As I stated earlier, the railbed was not built to take this sort of traffic and has quickly become a deteriorated mess of no practical use to any form of recreation except those with big wheels and lots of horsepower. There are many backcountry logging roads where they could ride but it appears the KVR is their one of choice.

There is some conflict with locals and landowners along the KVR route but what is needed is some leadership from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism to point out

the benefits this trail can continue to bring to rural areas hard hit by the slowing of the natural resources sector.

The Trans Canada Trail which uses some of the KVR right-of-way, was successful in getting local landowners to co-operate and even help maintain portions of the trail. To be able to cycle or hike on a railroad grade through this scenic terrain for this distance is a unique experience not to be found anywhere else in the world. Tourist bike traffic is much reduced in the last few years, mainly due to the deteriorating condition of the rail trail. Will this soon be only a memory of the great experience it once was?

The BC government has designated the KVR east of Bellevue-Myra Canyon as the 2010 Spirit Trail. In several areas we rode past large bright sign boards describing this trail. We saw no evidence of trail maintenance and little actual directional signage. Along this Spirit Trail, motorized vehicles churn along degrading the trail with every turn of their wheels. No evidence of any encouragement for non-motorized human endeavour to truly reflect the Olympic Spirit.

To lose this old historic rail right-of-way for non-motorized recreational use is a huge loss for the people of BC and indeed tourists from afar who come to appreciate the natural beauty and non-commercialized aspects of rural British Columbia. It can provide a much needed economic boost to small communities along the way and diversify local economics. To build a trail like this would cost millions and would never be done. Where is our provincial leadership on this issue?

Viire Daniels, North Vancouver

Region Tackles Water Concerns

KRISTI PATTON

Penticton Western News – Sept. 7, 2008

Environmental plans for the future were brought to the forefront at the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen board meeting with a focus on air and water.

At their regular meeting Thursday, the RDOS directors heard from both the Okanagan Basin Water Board and the Air Quality Coalition who stressed the importance of having all communities co-operate.

"There is a need for basin wide planning. All of the communities coming together is definitely a philosophy of the Okanagan Basin Water Board," said Anna Warwick Sears, executive director of the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

The Okanagan Basin Water Board presentation is requesting a three-year renewal of its mandate to assist local government and other water purveyors in improving water management in the Okanagan Valley by defining and promoting solutions to water management issues basin wide. The water management program is due for renewal on April 1, 2009 and will be reviewed further by the RDOS and other regional districts in the valley.

Park Would Sustain Area's Natural Beauty

Lately I have been walking the grasslands of the Okanagan-Similkameen, and speaking as a private citizen, I do worry about their fate. Somehow we pay lip service to the importance of our natural ecosystems, while our developments keep on whittling them away.

All this grassland walking and thinking has brought me to wonder about the national park reserve proposal.

The Okanagan Similkameen is the only major biome in Canada with no national park. I'm not sure why that happened, but Parks Canada is belatedly trying to rectify that oversight, with their current feasibility study. It is a pity that a park wasn't created here at the same time that Banff, Jasper and Waterton were created, before our valleys filled up with so many commercial uses and urban development. But that historic opportunity didn't happen, and now we are coming down to a crucial decision point: do we engage in the tortuously difficult, multi-sectoral, compromise-ridden process of park establishment, or do we walk away from it, saying our spectacular Okanagan Similkameen landscapes are now so highly developed that they are no longer worthy of national park status?

That decision comes down to us local folks: if we let Parks Canada and the politicians know that we want a park in some form, I'm pretty sure we could get one. If we don't want a park, then the folks at Parks Canada probably have lots of things to do in other parts of the country.

We should be careful to separate our specific opinions about the current park reserve proposal, from our general opinions about the federal government. It is a known fact that any federal initiative in Western Canada automatically becomes a lightning rod for all current and historical grievances: National Energy Policy, metrification, bilingualism, western alienation, child-proof pill containers – you name it. Along with hockey, fed-bashing is national sport in British Columbia, one I happily indulge in myself sometimes, but we shouldn't let those knee-jerk instincts cloud our opinions about a proposed national park.

In the Okanagan Similkameen, we are faced with a truly devastating irony: we have the highest biodiversity and endangered species values in the entire country, smack dab alongside some of the highest urban growth and development pressure in the entire country. Salamanders compete with subdivisions, gopher snakes with gold courses, yellow-breasted chats with Cabernet vineyards. The Greek gods could not have dreamed up a more exquisite dilemma.

The issue of livestock grazing is of course a challenging one. I value the long-term and positive role that ranching has played in the Okanagan, and yet I understand the livestock grazing and a class A park don't mix well. Many of us have urged Parks Canada to explore the development of a partnership role with the ranching community. I also note the example of Bar U Ranch in the Alberta foothills, a working ranch on land that is owned by Parks Canada. My dream is that the parks people and the ranchers sit down again, perhaps with an outside mediator, check their ideological baggage at the door, and have some honest, free-ranging discussions. There are good, thoughtful folks in both the local ranching community and in Parks Canada. I have no doubt they could develop collaborative, mutually beneficial solutions if they had a mind to.

I can't really comment on First Nation views on the park proposal, since I don't know the nature of their objections. But I do know that no government organization, whether it is federal or provincial, is more open to First Nation cultural, spiritual and employment values than Parks Canada. Here is a potential opportunity for co-management, not on a token but on a truly substantial scale.

Another objection I hear about the park proposal is that we don't want more tourist. Now as much as I am passionate about the grasslands, I have to admit they're not a huge tourist draw. The Grasslands National Park in Saskatchewan, which I know fairly well, pulls in a few thousand visitors a year, and they tend to be the more responsible, light-on-the-land types-birders, photog-

rappers and seekers of solitude. And the bonus-for the local Val Marie community adjacent to the park – is that visits are spread over a long season and visitors tend to stay for several days, instead of just weekend in-and-out trips in July and August. Incidentally, when GNP was first established, the local ranchers were solidly against the park. Now they, and the surrounding communities, are in support.

I am certain that there is a lot of quiet support here in the Okanagan Similkameen for a national park. Well folks, here's a news flash in politics (which is where the park decision will be made) quiet support is meaningless. Active, vocal support and persistent support, even by small minorities is what politicians respond to. Ideas and movements that generate quiet support tend to become footnotes in the history books.

There are huge challenges in creating a national park in a highly developed, fragmented landscape such as ours. But they are good challenges. We can be the ones to break new ground and move traditional 19th century park concepts boldly into the 21st.

I hiked up Black Mountain, near Chopaka, recently. Looked south across the rolling sweep of sagebrush grassland, down into the majestic valley of the Similkameen and up again to the serried ranks of the Cascade Mountains on the horizon. Wind and occasional birdcalls created a background tapestry of natural sound, free from the whine of cars and highways. Raptors circled silently in the thermals overhead. Autumn sun glinted off the needle and thread grass, and highlighted the subtle blues, grays and greens of big sagebrush. A few hardy ponderosa pines and Douglas firs claimed their niches on rocky knobs. The aspen in the draws were turning to the colour of hammered gold.

The timeless beauty of this our Okanagan landscape deserves to be celebrated, studied and sustained with a national park.

*Don Gayton, Summerland
Penticton Western News - Oct. 8, 2008*