

January 24, 2012

Trails BC Pioneers, Forgers of the Trans Canada Trail Legacy



Above is a photo of a group of BC TCT pioneers that got together during the Christmas Season of 2011.

Back row left to right: Léon Lebrun – 15.6 yrs (1996); Don Reid – 12 yrs (1999); Wayne Gannon 10 yrs (2001); Brian Simons 12.3 yrs (1999); Larri Woodrow – 18 yrs (1993)

Front row left to right: Bill Archibald – 20 yrs (1992); Jack Harder – 15.5 yrs (1996); Sherman Olson – 20 yrs (1992)



Other British Columbia TCT pioneers that have persevered (not in the photo) are: Murphy Shewchuk, past president – 17 yrs (1993); Kelly Koome – 18 yrs (1994); Al Skucas, current president – 12 yrs., 1999; Marilyn Hansen – 12 yrs., 1999; Sue Burnham – 12 yrs, 1999; Janice Mooney 15.8 yrs (1996). All are still working on or for the Trail and have persevered for more than 10 years to this day. Many others have made substantial volunteer contributions but, for a variety of reasons, are not active with us at this time. The list would be a very long indeed if we included all the volunteers, such as Janine Robinson, now living in Seattle, who got me involved and many others, that have made substantial contributions to this project since 1992. All can be considered heroes of the Trans Canada Trail.

What a good occasion to review a few highlights regarding the British Columbia contributions to the Trans Canada Trail.

Sherman Olson and Bill Archibald of Maple Ridge BC gave birth to the TCT legacy when they proposed and then organized the equestrian relay “Ride for Canada, the Unity Ride” for the Canada 125 celebration, an ‘expression of unity, pride, and love of our country’. At the time, Sherman was President of the Recreation Division of the Canadian Equestrian Federation, now Equine Canada, and President of Horse Council BC with Bill always intimately involved providing information and encouragement. It is thus that a large number of equestrians from all over Canada started a 125-day relay from Beaver Creek in the Yukon first headed south to Victoria before heading east, and from the Atlantic, St. John’s, Newfoundland, with Winnipeg as their destination. A Canada 125 Maple Leaf Plaque, split in two and carried from the two sides of the country, was reassembled in Winnipeg then carried to Ottawa for a ceremony held by Canada 125 on July 1st. As an aside, Queen Elizabeth II, at the same time, was visiting in Ottawa at an unveiling of a bronze statue depicting her sitting side saddle on her RCMP horse created by Jack Harman of B.C. resulting in an equestrian theme persisting in these celebrations. The maple leaf Canada 125 logo on the plaque was later adapted for the Trans Canada Trail. Following these ceremonies, the Canada 125 directors entertained the idea of providing a trail across Canada as its main legacy. On November 18, 1992 Sherman was presented with a plaque by the Governor General, the Right Honourable Ramon John Hnatyshyn, for being B.C.’s outstanding volunteer of Canada 125. For this and many other contributions to his community Sherman is now honoured in the Hall of Fame in his community of Maple Ridge.



Bill Pratt from Alberta and Pierre Camu from Quebec of the Canada 125 Corporation, took on the task of initiating the legacy project that became the Trans Canada Trail, one as the Executive Director (Pratt) and the other (Camu) as chair. With a \$500,000 budget from the Canada 125 legacy fund, they registered the Trans Canada Trail as a charitable organization and the Provinces were consulted for their approval for such an idea resulting with organizations in each province being selected to take the lead.



Outdoor Recreation Council of B.C. was approached to take the lead in B.C. This umbrella organization decided that what became The Trails Society of British Columbia (Trails BC) be formed as one of its group members to undertake this immense project with the help of Centennial Trails Trust and the National Hiking Trails, now Hike Canada and Hike BC. Sherman Olson was the first chairperson of Trails BC, followed by John Appleby, aided by Bill Archibald to work on its structure and constitution that officially came into effect February 23, 1995. At the same time, Bill Archibald was President along with Murphy Shewchuk, Vice-President of Rails-to-Trails BC (R2TBC), a group member of Outdoor Recreation Council. All

these groups provided crucial routing information. Bill Archibald became known as the Trailboss because of his knowledge of trails in the province and Sherman Olson the encourager and provider of inspiration with his ability to run with ideas provided to him by others. To help brand the newly formed organization, Sherman along with Bill created the original Trails BC logo.



Sherman, as a director of Trans Canada Trail, served as its president from 1995 to 2001 (6 yrs.). As president he launched the TCT Year 2000 Relay from Tuktoyaktuk on February 9 of that year, thus firmly establishing the Trans Canada Trail legacy. On the left is one of the vessels passed along in the relay that carried ocean water from the Arctic, Pacific, and Atlantic to Ottawa.

David Turner moved from Ontario to B.C. in 1999. He started with the TCT in 1994 in Caledon, Ontario and led the charge for the establishment of two distinctive TCT pavilions; one in Caledon East, Ontario, June 22, 1996, the first one completed in Canada; and, the other in North Vancouver, B.C., a First Nations Theme TCT Pavilion, June 23, 2003. The TCT Trail Marker Structures were designed by architect Bill Milne from Alberta, who also was a TCT Director and passed away in 2008.



By 2001, following the TCT Year 2000 Relay, enough of the TCT routing across British Columbia was determined to publish its description in a trail guide, 'Trans Canada Trail, the British Columbia Route', produced and published by Mussio Ventures Ltd, on-going supporters of the Trans Canada Trail. Author Bruce Obee, hired by the TCT, researched and produced the next edition in 2008, 'Trans Canada Trail – British Columbia'.

Some of the BC Government's main actions that contributed to the advancement of Trans Canada Trail Project were as follows:

The KVR

- 1995 – bought by the government for about \$5M
- 1998 – Permits and tenure provided to Trails BC to upgrade the rail trail infrastructure for the TCT. Along with slides, washouts, and unsafe tunnels, the bridges had either been removed or were in bad repair and needed re-decking making the rail grade impractical for recreation. The permit specified that the Trail was for non-motorized recreation. Meetings were held with landowners and stakeholders along the rail grade with the landowners insisting on a non-motorized trail and other conditions such as specially designed gates. At this time the Land Use Coordinating Office (LUCO) was established to coordinate various Ministries to do this work. E-Teams paid for by the government and Trans Canada Trail were hired to do much of the work spending approximately \$5M.

Columbia Western Rail Trail was finally passed over to the BC Government in 2004 from the Trans Canada Trail Foundation. Trans Canada Trail had acquired this rail corridor among others across Canada from the CPR in early 1999 after several years of negotiations, work done by Russell Irvine, of Vancouver Island, a TCT director at the time.

Established the Recreation Sites and Trails BC Branch

- This Government Branch was created to oversee Recreation Sites and Trails in B.C. first under the Ministry of Tourism, Culture (Sports) and the Arts and now the Ministry of Forest, Lands and Natural Resources Operations.
- It is instrumental in coordinating projects and land issues along the Trans Canada Trail on Crown land much like LUCO did under the previous government but with the additional power to issue permits, tenure, etc.
- Much work is being done with Regional Districts to coordinate these efforts and to oversee large sections of trail.

Spirit of 2010 Rails to Trails launched by B.C. Premier Gordon Campbell:

- Includes the Kettle Valley Rail Trail, the Slocan Rail Trail, the Cowichan Rail Trail and the Salmo-Troupe Rail Trail.
- Launched August 27, 2004 to upgrade a number of rail trails including all those designated for the TCT to create a tourism product for cyclists, walkers, equestrians, and cross-country skiing. \$4.2M with another injection of \$2.1 in 2009 was allocated to this initiative from a variety of Government sources including the TCT and Federal Programs.

The Trans Canada Trail South BC Route is generally made up of the following as of January 2012:

Main South Route (including 60 + km of ferry crossings)	1,872 km
Sea-to-Sky	80 km + more to come and excludes the water route
West Vancouver walking alternate	24 km
Victoria to Golden Ears Bridge via Lochside, Delta and Surrey proposed alternate.	88 km (not including water crossing)
Chilliwack to Hope Alternate	70 km
Coquihalla walking rail trails	5 km
Pitt Meadows/Maple Ridge Spur	20 km
Others forthcoming	Example – Slocan Valley
Total South Route at this time	2160 km
Total North Route at this time	1054 km
Total BC Routing completed and being processed	More than 3,000 km
Pavilion Trail Markers with Donor Panels	18
Rail Trail	785 km
Dike Trail	58 km
Road routing at this time	Approx. 30% - 555 km, 410 km of this is east of Castlegar.

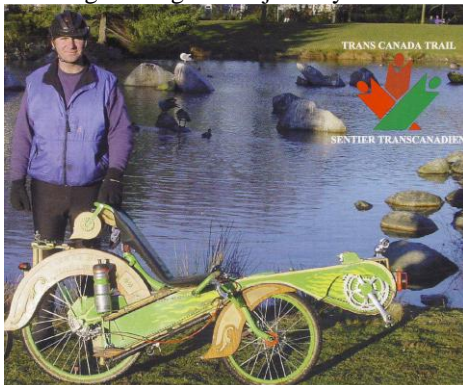
Below are other instances illustrating how the Trans Canada Trail evolved in B.C. It especially underlines B.C.'s pride and underlying motivation to feel connected with the rest of Canada while enriching its quality of life for its citizens, and building a cachet that will attract people from around the world.

- The 55-km Galloping Goose Trail from the Selkirk Bridge in Victoria to Leechtown, north of Sooke, became the first official B.C. TCT trail segment to be registered in 1996.
- The first TCT contribution to B.C., \$30,000, was for the Selkirk Bridge at the Victoria end of the Galloping Goose (rail) Trail, June 26/96.
- The first TCT pavilion in B.C. opened October 12, 1998 on Granville Island, Vancouver. More than 1500 people attended this ceremony in a wind and rain storm that caused it to move indoors. Not all were able to fit standing inside the standby False Creek Recreation Center activity room and therefore many took in the ceremony looking in glass windows and listening on speakers placed outside. We now have **18 TCT Pavilions with more than 36,500 inscriptions in BC honouring proud Canadians who made contributions to the Trail and to Canadian life.**
- The designer and fabricator of an impressive TCT Ocean Gateway Monument was Don Richards of Maple Ridge, B.C. It is presently installed in Tuktoyaktuk, N.W.T, and in Summerside, P.E.I. He also designed and fabricated the vessels that carried the water from our three oceans for the TCT Relay Year 2000 to be mixed in a larger vessel of the same design in Ottawa during a ceremony at the TCT Pavilion in Parc Jacques Cartier, Quebec. That vessel now resides in the Canadian Museum of Civilization.
- The first to explore a feasible path across B.C. was completed on foot by Kelly Koome (1993) on a route suggested by Bill Archibald. In 2001 he completed, on bike, the BC southern route as described at that time. Equestrians Jim McCraie, Aldergrove, Les Brogden, Maple Ridge, and Phil Janzen, Yarrow, accompanied by many others along the way also rode on a possible route across the whole of B.C. in 1994.
- Murphy Shewchuk, author of local trail guides, became Trails BC's webmaster and newsletter editor.
- Some in B.C. known to ride or walk the complete Trans Canada Trail across B.C. are: cyclists Jeannette Klein and Donna Mae Wilson, Vancouver Island; Léon Lebrun, Coquitlam, cycling and/or walking; cyclist, John Evanochko, Cloverdale, and walker Huang Chui-Long, Vancouver. Jeannette and Donna Mae have attempted to cycle the complete trail across Canada and walker, Dana Meise, B.C. is presently completing the whole trail across Canada on foot. There are many others taking up the challenge. Presently, there are still several gaps in the route across Canada making it nearly impossible to follow the route completely in some provinces. We are hopeful that these gaps will essentially be eliminated by Canada's 150th in 2017. Trail closures due to snowed-in passes make it impossible to follow parts of the route for several months of the year.



We frequently meet people who believe in and want to be part of the TCT vision. Others write to us or send us their diaries. They are people of all walks of life, professionals, artists, adventurers, young and old, etc. Many want to affirm their belief in this vision by simply having their names in one of the Trans Canada Trail Pavilions.

An example of unique or colourful people who have been inspired by the Trail is Pierre Doré from Quebec who made B.C. his home for several years during which time he crossed the country and travelled in the western states on his wood framed recumbent bicycle that he constructed to promote the Trail while living off postcard sales of him doing this. Another is the Mash family of Langley that started walking the trail from Victoria in August 2002 and 10 years later is now in Leduc, Alberta. Every year they walk for two weeks faithfully following the trail with others in the family and friends joining them. Their mother has crossed all of B.C. and the father also walked with the family but passed away a few years ago. This year there is a newborn that will be brought along on the journey.





Jean-Paul Drapeau-Bureau of Hope has been so inspired by the Trans Canada Trail that he refurbished a bus in its honour, is a member of the Trans Canada Trail and has attempted to have his name inscribed in as many TCT Pavilions as possible across Canada.

Huang Chui-Long of Vancouver faithfully hiked the entire TCT through British Columbia, crossing the Myra Canyon soon after the Trestles were burnt out in 2003, finished in Calgary then flew to Newfoundland and started working his way west. The last we heard he was in New Brunswick. He hikes six weeks at a time completely self-sufficient with his 60-lb pack and his distinctive tent labelled with his goal to hike all of the TCT. He donated \$1 for every km of trail he walked in B.C. and beyond.





Don Richards of Maple Ridge and his proud TCT creations supported here by Léon Lebrun and Sherman Olson.



The TCT legacy in British Columbia has now been established thanks to all the tireless work of volunteers and many trail groups along with the goodwill of many others including all the jurisdictions along the TCT, the B.C. Government, and property owners that embrace the Trail within their purview. Each of the six southern regions in the province has its own story to tell along with its list of TCT heroes. We are hopeful that those who will follow us will be able to maintain and enhance the dream or vision of a low impact Trail that provides a quality experience for walkers, cyclists, and equestrians comprising mainly of welcoming greenways connecting a multitude of Canadian communities with the purpose of soaking in our heritage and natural surroundings, linking us to the whole nation, and providing enjoyment and active healthy living, a means to become physically and mentally fit. The potential for a world class trail across B.C. and indeed Canada is within our grasp, not just a route but a trail that will attract its intended users. Marketing 'The longest trail in the world' assumes a quality experience for its users, a 'Route Verte' across B.C. and the rest of the country.

Léon Lebrun
Vice President and Southwest Regional Director
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