

# Trans Canada Trail:

by John Bellini

**J**ust imagine an 18,000 km recreational trail winding its way through every province and territory, linking hundreds of communities along its route. At various locations along the way, a Trail Pavilion appears, displaying the names and messages of the people whose generous donations made this possible. That will be the Trans Canada Trail – the longest recreational trail in the world, made by and for Canadians to enjoy now and for generations to come.

Of course, finding ways to connect our country is not new for Canadians. Our First Nations people used our rivers and waterways to cross the country for hundreds of years before new methods of travel were devel-



oped. In 1885, Donald Smith drove in the last spike in Craigellachie, British Columbia. A very modest event, but in doing so he officially opened the western frontier and forged our nation as we know it today. In 1966, the

Trans Canada Highway was completed, making it possible to drive and transport goods by road from one end of the country to the other.

Following in these footsteps, the Trans Canada Trail is the most ambitious endeavour ever undertaken by the volunteer sector in Canada. Not only will this national trail have an east-west axis, it will also have a north-south axis, thereby connecting Canada's three northern territories. When complete, the Trans Canada Trail will link our people, our land and our three oceans like no other Canadian initiative in our history. A new trail for a new generation of Canadians: we are making history!

A project of this scope and magnitude must have the active support and involvement of all levels of society in every province and territory. Scouts Canada is playing a role in communities throughout the country. They have planted trees, worked on various clean-up projects, attended Pavilion



Photos courtesy of Trans Canada Trail

# Making Modern-Day History

opening ceremonies in activity uniform, and helped build the Trail. Most importantly, Scouts Canada continues to show respect for nature in all of their activities and practices living in harmony with the important and delicate eco-systems that are found along the Trail. Baden-Powell would have been very proud of the role Scouts Canada is playing in support of this grand, national endeavour.

The Trans Canada Trail is a vision which is only half complete. Approximately 52% of the Trail is operational; we have quite a ways to go before our dream becomes reality. Prince Edward Island is the only province that has completed its section of the Trans Canada Trail, and it is interesting to note that the Trail has been built on the former rail corridor – one part of our heritage is now being used to build another part of our heritage! In Newfoundland, the Trail is also being built on the former rail bed. This 885 km rail corridor has been converted into a provincial park, making it the longest, narrowest park in the world!

Nova Scotia and New Brunswick are progressing well, and Quebec is about 80% complete. Ontario is keeping pace but the northern part of Ontario represents a particular challenge because of the large land mass and sparse population.

Manitoba is well on the way to completion as is British Columbia. The prairie provinces of Alberta and Saskat-

chewan are struggling, particularly in the rural areas. Whenever a trail is being built over long distances with few people, it is more difficult to build and maintain. Furthermore, the Trail passes through or adjacent to agricultural lands and thus it is important to have the support of the people who manage the land – the Trans Canada Trail always strives to be a good neighbour.

In Yukon, the Trail is progressing but there are some challenges such as First Nation land disputes, which must be settled before any recreational trails can be built. In the Northwest Territories, the Trail will be primarily a water route and use the historic Mackenzie River. Similarly, in Nunavut, the route of the Trail will likely follow the Northwest Passage and be a winter trail.

We are striving to complete the Trans Canada Trail by the year 2010, in time for the Winter Olympics in Whistler, British Columbia. Our dream is to have the Olympic Torch Relay take place on the Trans Canada Trail. What a way to inaugurate a new national icon!

In order to follow the progress of the Trail throughout Canada, check out the web site at [www.tctrail.ca](http://www.tctrail.ca) or call 1-800-865-3636. X

– John Bellini is President & CEO of Trans Canada Trail.



**“These people helped make this Trail happen!”**

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