

Friends of the South Slopes

March 2019



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Introducing your 2019 FOSS Executive

President—Brad Wright

Vice-President—Daphne Richard

Secretary—Isabel Pritchard

Treasurer—Pete Spencer

In this month's newsletter we're showcasing FOSS' President, Brad Wright, and Secretary, Isabel Pritchard. Brad has been a FOSS Director since 2009. Isabel is a founding member of FOSS and has been on the board since 1998.



What drew you to FOSS initially?

(Brad) The FOSS mission spoke to me in a way that I knew that I could contribute to the cause and feel empowered that I am aligned with the sustainability and environmental responsibility values. "F.O.S.S. will work collaboratively with BC Parks and the other land managers in an environmentally responsible manner to create a legacy of sustainable and accessible trails on the South Slopes of Kelowna for the benefit of our community."

(Isabel) My husband grew up in Kelowna, so when we first moved to the South Kelowna neighborhood we started driving old logging roads with our young children. I was from the prairies and soon learned that those mountain views were not a homogenous

land of trees and rocks. I was hooked! Later on we acquired horses and the exploration was endless.

In 1994 I was invited to become a member of a Land and Resource Management Plan which was being set up by the Provincial Government to provide direction for the management of Crown Lands



and resources within the management area. The following year (July 1995) the Okanagan Shuswap LRMP began meeting. It was comprised of representatives from every aspect of land management: water, timber, wildlife, mining, recreation (that was where I fit in), tourism and agriculture. Over a period of 5 years a group of about 40-50 individuals including ministry staff routinely met for a full day every 3 months to work on meeting the interests of all the sectors. The result of this work was an agreement completed in Sept. 2000 and approved in 2001 by the BC Cabinet. This resulted in the creation of 49 new protected areas within the Okanagan Shuswap Plan area. One of those areas was Myra-Bellevue Provincial Park.

How long have you been involved with the Society?

(Brad) My family and I landed in Kelowna in 2004 as a result of a job transfer and we immediately gravitated to the south slopes for recreation and exercise. The south slopes outings made me realize that as responsible trail users we could contribute to the sustainability quotient by making part of our recreation trips simple maintenance opportunities as well.

(Isabel) I was part of the founding group. (Incorporation February 26, 1996)

What are the biggest challenges facing the Society today?

(Brad) The biggest challenges for the society stem from the extreme popularity of the areas around Kelowna as recreational opportunities by all manner of outdoor recreation. We spend a huge amount of effort trying to balance the needs of the user groups against the resources we have at our disposal.

(Isabel) We need more member involvement in the operation of FOSS. .We have great support from the members when we put out projects and ideas. But we need to have more support for big projects. Board members involved with those put in so much work to accomplish our ends. When we announce we want to establish trails on the SEKID lands for instance, everyone is supportive but the work of meetings, constant follow up, permissions, trail development etc., etc. is out of sight and mind. Perhaps we could invite people to shadow various positions to get an idea of what we do and how things get done.

What is your ultimate vision for the South Slopes?

(Brad) My vision for the South Slopes is based on the continual and sustainable access to the south slopes including connecting the lower rail trails with Mission Creek Trail (as advocated by Friends of Mission Creek), KLO Creek Regional Park, through SEKID property and Crown land to Myra-Bellevue Provincial Park, thereby enhancing Kelowna connections to the south slopes. Further trail continuity would be beneficial; from Myra-Bellevue Provincial Park to Gillard Forest area, the John's Family Nature Conservancy, Okanagan Mountain Park and ultimately Naramata.

(Isabel) It is the impossible dream! I would like the area to maintain its feeling you are getting out into natural surroundings away from the city. At the same time it should provide sustainable trails that can be used by the ever-increasing numbers who discover this area.

What is your favourite spot/trail on the South Slopes?

(Brad) My favorite spot is the Hromek Road trail head area that gives great access by bike, hike or other means to the abundant wildlife and great views of Okanagan Lake from the 900 meter elevation. Winter snowshoeing is awesome and summer hiking is cooler than valley bottoms.

BC Parks First Annual Volunteer Conference

On March 2nd, 2019, BC Parks (Okanagan Region) hosted a 'Volunteer Conference', inviting 'South Slopes' stakeholders to attend and share their backgrounds, interests and goals. President, Brad Wright and Vice-president, Daphne Richard, represented the Friends of the South Slopes. Other groups in attendance were: Myra Canyon Trestle Restoration Society (MCTRS), P.A.C.E Sports & Fitness, Back Country Horsemen of British Columbia/Okanagan Chapter (BCHBC), Kelowna ATV Club, Mountain Bikers of the Central Okanagan (MTBCO), Myra Canyon Bicycle Rentals and Central Okanagan Search and Rescue (COSAR)

BC Parks staff, Christian Morrisette (Senior Park Ranger East Okanagan) and Steven Bercek (Community Liaison Officer), provided an excellent overview of the BC Parks' mandate and processes. This was followed by each of the groups making a presentation. Here is a summary provided by Christian Morrisette, Senior Park Ranger, East Okanagan Region:



"Thank you very much for all of your contributions to making the Volunteer Conference such a resounding success. The comments we received indicated that the morning component where each group showcased their heritage, capabilities, interests and goals was extremely instructional. The breakout sessions were a venue for all volunteer groups to provide input into project development and resource availability. This culminated in a spectacular display of cooperation between FOSS, the Backcountry Horsemen, MTBco, COSAR and BC Parks, to commit to the clearing of Wildhorse Canyon Trail in Okanagan Mountain Park this May! Wow! We could certainly use some more volunteer groups to bring their resources to bear on this project; any other volunteers that may be interested, please contact me directly. I'll be creating an operations' plan for the venture this month so please don't delay.

Some of the other highlighted discussion focused on ATV access through Myra-Bellevue, bridging and protecting the Tufa formations at Angel Springs, multi-use capability in the Crawford Trail network, Myra Station refitting and Fredericks Creek trail refurbishing.

On another note, we have been attempting to maintain an accurate 'use calendar' for the East Okanagan Parks. If your organization will be hosting an event in one of the Parks please forward us the dates so we can better de-conflict with other groups when they request access.

Again we sincerely thank all those that attended and we hope to have an even larger reach for our next conference that will be in October 2019." Christian.Morrisette@gov.bc.ca



March: South Slopes from Mt. Boucherie

Other Information that was shared at the BC Parks Volunteer Conference:

KVR (Kettle Valley Railbed)

- **New** highway-quality **direction signage** will be installed en route to encourage use of the Myra Forestry Road rather than June Springs/Little White Forestry Road.
- **New decking** on all trestles is in the works.
- Stats: More than **50% of visitors are from out-of-country**.
- **Interpretive sites** being considered/planned, pending approval (ie. Ruth Station ovens).
- **Gallagher's Canyon Community Artists** are doing a painting for the Myra Canyon Trestle Restoration Society
- **Pooley Creek bridge on Bypass Trail**: BC Parks is considering removal if not being utilized.
- **Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA)**: considering **multi use KVR trail** (ie. with dual motorized/non-motorized sections). Kelowna ATV Club has also given them GPS'd suggestions for numerous KVR 'crossings as access to motorized areas is often difficult.
- **Canyon Lakes**: BC Parks is planning an outhouse installation for dispersed camping in the area (motorized access base).
- Hoodoo Adventures has purchased the **Chute Lake Lodge**, with recent renovations refreshing the historic recreation property to offer a year-round, world-class adventure destination.

MTCCo (Mountain Bikers of the Central Okanagan): A Section 57 (authorization to undertake work on Crown Lands) has been applied for re: the Gillard trail network, which will include a climbing component. MTBco is currently fund-raising for that.



The 2018 Okanagan Mtn. Provincial Park Wildfire

Yet another wildfire occurred in OMPP last year, resulting in further impact to Wild Horse Canyon Trail. FOSS' amazing trail maintenance volunteer Andrew Stevenson (whose passion for OMPP is SO much appreciated) took these two photos in October, 2018, while out on a mission to clear Boulder & Wild Horse Canyon Trails.



2019 FOSS Memberships

In mid March, FOSS sent out an e-mail 'reminder' to its 2018 members who have not renewed their FOSS memberships for 2019. Please continue to support FOSS by renewing your membership—and please encourage your hiking, cycling, riding, running friends to do the same! Information on membership is on FOSS' website: www.foss-kelowna.org