

# FOOTPRINTS ON



# THE VI TRAIL



[www.vi-trail.ca](http://www.vi-trail.ca)

**WINTER, 2018/19**

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### **VOLUNTEER TRAIL BUILDERS ENJOY HARD WORK**

*(Editor's note: Big thanks to Past President Gil Parker and partner Joan for the following submission)*

Based on our recent visit with the Alberni Trail Crew, there is a genuine feeling of comradeship among the various members, and of confidence of a job well done.

Our meeting with a dozen regular trail builders in a Port Alberni coffee shop was perhaps unusual. Stephen Stirling, local Director of the Vancouver Island Trail Association, describes the group as "more used to drinking coffee out of a thermos in a damp forest". But the group has accomplished more than just drinking coffee over the last few years. On the Vancouver Island Trail alone, (formerly VI Spine Trail) members have contributed to the Tuck Lake Trail, the Runners Trail, and various stages of the Alberni Inlet Trail.

Access to parts of the Trail is difficult, requiring driving over many kilometers of rough logging roads, and then hiking to the location of the actual trail work, as well as carrying materials and equipment needed to create a walkable trail. On the actual worksite, hours are spent cutting shrubbery and small trees off the designated route, reshaping the ground (and sometimes rock) to be

more comfortable for hiking boots, and sometimes finishing the surface with native soil or gravel, or even woodchips. The experts on the crews operate power or hand saws, construct small bridges over streams, and redirect water off the trail route.

#### **Coffee with the Alberni crew**



It's obvious from the banter around the table that the members enjoy their work parties (usually on Tuesdays). These are not young men; they are experienced machinists, foresters, even botanists.

Harold Carlson is the historian of the crew, bringing along to our meeting a copy of the CNPR (Canadian Northern Pacific Railroad) record of railroad grade construction (1912-1914), that forms the basis of much of the Alberni Inlet Trail. But they all agree, the crew could use a few more and younger workers.

Over the next three days, we met with David Webb, (from Qualicum) and Terry Lewis, Director of Operations for the overall Vancouver Island Trail. Based in Courtenay, it will be a two-hour drive for Terry to take us into the Salmon River area.

We watch how Terry navigates the incredible network of rough logging roads, driving his four-wheel-drive pickup while explaining the territory to us. On most roads, he operates a radio while we travel, to avoid conflict with active road building equipment and logging trucks. It becomes clear that Terry's knowledge of forestry personnel and culture is indispensable to getting a trail of this magnitude completed. The Vancouver Island Trail extends from Victoria to Cape Scott, but this segment, including the Salmon River and White River drainages, is all built through semi-active logging areas.

There are many other volunteers who work on the Trail. For example, Glen van Horne of Campbell River works alone on his chosen section along Grilse Creek, even constructing a log bridge over the creek. Together with Doug Goodman in Port McNeil, Terry and David in Courtenay-Qualicum, and Stephen in Port Alberni, volunteers form the backbone of the construction efforts.

**Terry & Gil preparing the log bridge**



Last summer, Isobel Glover completed the first continuous hike of the 750+ km Trail in just over two months. Isobel, a 20-year-old hiker from Victoria, was moving quickly and challenged Terry and David to keep ahead of her, with their advice, trail guidance and actual construction. Terry recalls, "David and I finished the trail over the Kokummi Pass, only three days ahead of Isobel". David installed a motion-activated camera on that section of the trail, capturing images of bear and elk now regularly using the trail.

**Isobel Glover – First to Complete the Trail**



It is clear that volunteer trail builders contribute all sorts of skills to the task. More than anything else, they are bringing part of their own personality to the Vancouver Island Trail. They are creating a recreational facility available to anyone living on the Island or interested in hiking here.

**David Webb admiring one of the many Yellow Cedars near John Fraser Lake**



## IN THIS ISSUE, WE CONTINUE OUR FOCUS ON ONE OUR BOARD MEMBERS:

### Elena Elder



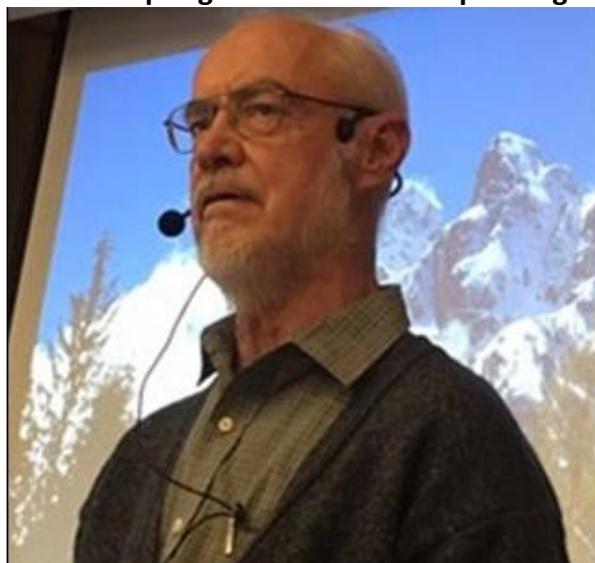
Elena is originally from the West Kootenays and has made Victoria her home since moving here in 2008 to complete her degree in commerce at Royal Roads University. She is a Chartered Professional Accountant currently working with the Capital Regional District and has a background in Public Practice Accounting. Elena joined the VISTA Board in 2016 and sees the VI-Trail as an incredible opportunity to increase ecotourism and connect communities up and down the Island. Her love of the outdoors, adventure and travel keep her exploring the ever-expanding network of trails that the Island has to offer. In the past few years Elena has hiked in Nepal, Thailand, Spain and all over BC. These trips have motivated her support for the local VISTA efforts. Imagining the full 700+ km trail with lodging, camping, resupply posts, hard routes and easy routes, hikers from around the world and the camaraderie that comes with a long day on the trail keeps inspiration in the journey.



## VISTA'S GIL PARKER IS AWARDED HONORARY MEMBERSHIP IN THE ACC (Alpine Club of Canada)

"It is a matter of pride to our section that long-standing member Gil Parker was recently awarded "Honorary Membership in the ACC". This is the highest recognition given by the national club, and is granted to individuals with a strong and sustained commitment to the Canadian mountain environment and Canadian mountaineering. In this way Gil joins a very select group of ACC members who have been presented with this award since 1906".

### Gil accepting the award and responding



In presenting Gil with the award at the Swan Lake slide show on 10 May, tribute was paid to Gil's track-record of turning vision to action in many different areas. Gil's work in encouraging club members and activities at both the section and national levels, his contributions to mountain literature, and his initiative in fostering international relationships across the political divide of the cold war, were all noted. Of particular local interest is Gil's remarkable work in founding the Vancouver Island Spine Trail Association (VISTA) and his ongoing commitment to establish this long-distance trail throughout the length Vancouver Island.

## **As Always - An Important Reminder To “Be Safe”!!:**

*“VISTA wishes to remind and warn all those considering visiting the VI Trail that the Trail is a “Work in Progress” and that certain portions have yet to be completed, and in some instances may not even be accessible. Travel on the planned Trail is completely at the risk of the individual doing so. Please realize that some sections of the VI Trail are through unpopulated areas where users must be self-reliant with respect to maps and the use of directional equipment, and where wild animals may pose a risk to some types of activities.”*

### **VISTA’S Vision For a Homegrown Adventure:**

*A signature recreation destination in Canada, the Vancouver Island Trail will span more than 770 km from Victoria to Cape Scott. Traversing both ancient and working forests, and wild coasts, while joining island communities, the Trail in its entirety will be a 2-3 month-long journey. Not just for long distance hikers, day hikers will enjoy many access points. By 2020, Vancouver Island will have a unique recreational opportunity and a showcase for its communities, including highlighting First Nation’s Art, Culture, Language, and History.*

*We hope you will visit our website at: [www.vi-trail.ca](http://www.vi-trail.ca)*

*Interested in our map of the VI Trail and links to the various sections: [www.vi-trail.ca/map](http://www.vi-trail.ca/map)*

*Once again, your feedback and offered input is encouraged and valued –*

*Please feel free to contact the Editor, Scott Henley, at:*

*[IslandHikerGuy@GMail.Com](mailto:IslandHikerGuy@GMail.Com)*

## **Want to Get Involved?**

***There are two main ways to help VISTA complete the VI Trail:***

***If you have the time, [Become a Volunteer](#)***

***If you don’t have any spare time, become one of the***

***[Friends of the VI Trail](#)***

***and help us out with a tax-deductible donation***

