

ISSUE

1

Voyageur Trail Association Newsletter

Spring 2021







LETTER FROM *THE EDITOR*

Welcome to the 2021 Hiking Season!

In this edition, we pay special tribute to two individuals who have made a lasting impression on the Voyageur Trail Association, and hiking within the Sault Ste. Marie Area: Founding Father Paul Syme and longtime Coordinating Council member Jack Dunning, both of whom passed away last Fall.

This edition of the VTA Newsletter also features an article on trail running, including advice on local organizations and events to help you get involved if you are new to the sport. We also bring you a humorous yet historical reflection on the evils of snowshoeing, as well as important information about Spring Trail Closures in the Sault Ste. Marie area.

Be sure to check out the announcement about the *NEW* Voyageur Trail Association app that is in development and if you have any high-resolution images, or trail descriptions to contribute, be sure to get in touch!

Lastly, we close off this edition of the VTA Newsletter with poetry from the trail, and a look at the magic of the Lake Superior Coastal Trail, a section of the Voyageur Trail nestled within Lake Superior Provincial Park.

As we move into the Spring Hiking season, please be sure to follow us on social media (Instagram and Facebook) at @voyageurtrailassociation for updates on trail conditions, temporary logging closures, and trail crew work parties.

We're looking forward to a time when you can join us on the trails and at events again. Until then, make sure you recreate responsibly by following local guidelines from your regional health authority regarding group size and travel restriction

Happy Trails,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K. Johansen" with a stylized circular flourish at the end.

Kelsey Johansen

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 06 PAUL SYME REMEMBERING THE VTA FOUNDING FATHER
- 10 REMEMBERING JACK DUNNING
- 11 MEET THE NEW VTA COORDINATING COUNCIL
- 12 THANK YOU TO ALL OUR PARTNERS
- 13 TRAIL RUNNING
- 16 SNOWSHOES: THE LESSER OF TWO EVILS
- 17 CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS SUMMER 2020 ISSUE
- 18 SAULTEAUX CLUB: SPRING TRAIL CLOSURE NOTICE
- 19 VOYAGEUR TRAIL APP IN DEVELOPMENT
- 20 POETRY FROM THE TRAIL
- 21 THE LAKE SUPERIOR COASTAL TRAIL



MASTHEAD & CONTRIBUTORS

Steve Dominy

Paul Syme: Remembering the VTA Founding Father

Steve Dominy

Remembering Jack Dunning

Danaé Ingram

Trail Running

Mark Crofts

Snowshoes: the lesser of two evils

Mark Crofts

Saulteaux Club: Spring Trail Closure Notice

Steve Dominy

VTA App Development

Bill Cole

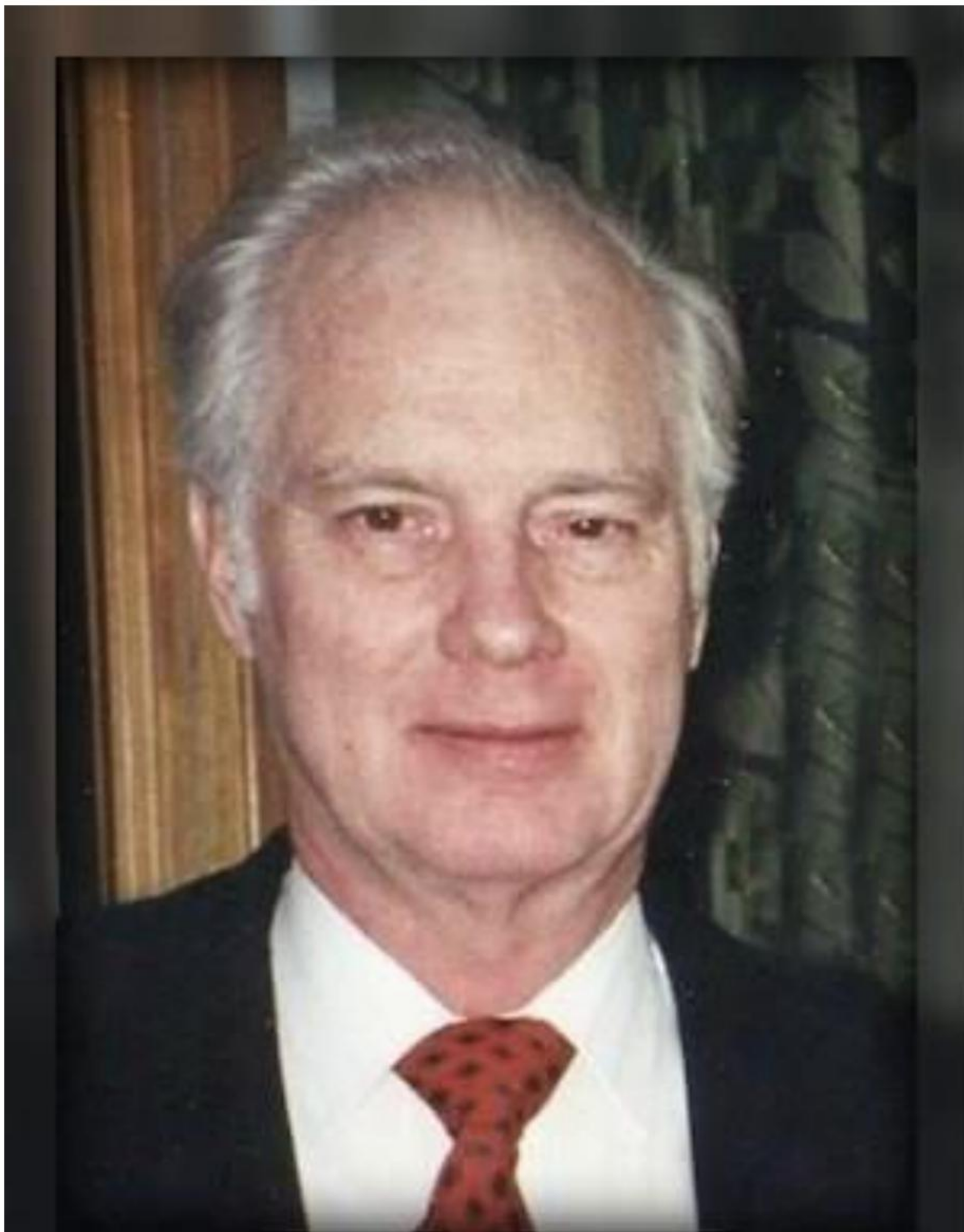
Poetry on the Trail

Dawn Elmore

The Lake Superior Coastal Trail



**COVER IMAGE
PIXABAY**



Paul Syme

Remembering the VTA Founding Father

Steve Dominy

On September 28, 2020 the Voyageur Trail Association lost its founding father, Dr. Paul Syme. Many (probably most) readers will not be familiar with this name. However, the trails you are enjoying today would likely not exist were it not for 'Father Trail', as he was once fondly known to many.

Paul Syme had a vision for what was to become the Voyageur Trail, extending from South Baymouth to Thunder Bay. Invited to a meeting with Sault Ste. Marie's Commissioner of Parks and Recreation to discuss a trail through the northern part of the city, Paul immediately saw the potential to expand this concept. As a member of the Bruce Trail Association, he began rallying people around the idea of a trail that would link up with the northern terminus of the trail in Tobermory, which has a ferry link to South Baymouth. That was in 1973, and in just a few short years several hundred kilometers of the Voyageur Trail were completed in and around Terrace Bay, Wawa, Sault Ste. Marie, Echo Bay, Desbarats, Bruce Mines, Thessalon, Iron Bridge, Blind River, Elliot Lake and Espanola. Subsequently, several other communities have taken up the torch to develop missing links in the trail.

This is quite a feat, considering the effort involved in getting permission from sometimes reluctant landowners, marking and clearing sections of trail, producing a trail guide and newsletter, raising funds, and of course soliciting new members and volunteers. The VTA archives are a testament to the Paul's tireless efforts in those early years. Many (perhaps hundreds) of typewritten letters (in the days before word processors) bear his signature.

It was under Paul's leadership, boundless energy and enthusiasm that an active group of volunteers accomplished this gargantuan task. This speaks volumes to the influence Paul had on every volunteer he brought on side to support trail building and promote hiking in this part of northern Ontario.

Paul was the first elected president of the VTA, remaining in the position for 10 years. The group adopted the southern Ontario model of dividing the trail into sections and assigning responsibility for trail building, landowner relations, maintenance, public hikes, promotion, etc. to local Voyageur Hiking Trail Clubs. Even the trail markings (5 x 15 cm blazes) followed the standards used by other hiking clubs in the province at the time, something still seen on many parts of our trail today.

In 1990 Lieutenant Governor Lincoln Alexander awarded Paul the Corps d'Elite Ontario (see photo). Created by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Recreation, this award was designed to acknowledge Ontario residents from all sectors of the community, recognizing outstanding efforts by those volunteers or recreational professionals who contributed to the development of recreation at either the provincial or regional level.

Paul was recognized as being "a tireless worker for recreation and conservation, [who also] served in executive positions with Hike Ontario and the National Trails Association".

A brass plaque commemorating the official opening of the first trail section and recognizing Dr. Paul Syme as founder of the Voyageur Trail Association, was erected at Gros Cap in 1985. (A new home for the plaque is being sought, which was removed when landownership at the trailhead changed in the 1990's.) The trail segment from Maki Rd. to Goulais Ave. in the Saulteaux Section was designated the Paul Syme Trail; Paul had deemed this his favourite trail to hike.

Remembered as a polite, kind, soft-spoken and thoughtful gentleman, Paul was highly focused on any challenge he accepted. It was not the many accolades he received that motivated him. In fact, he once remarked on the satisfaction that comes from being part of an idea that is greater than oneself. The many hundreds of volunteers who fell in behind him over the past 47 years also experienced that satisfaction, consciously or otherwise, thanks to Paul's vision and determination. And encouragingly, the number of trail users has been increasing annually. In fact, indications are that the pandemic this year has prompted record numbers of new hikers to discover our trails.

The Thunderbird logo adopted by the VTA was designed in 1975 by Janet Clark of Wawa at the request of Paul Syme, who asked her to incorporate the thunderbird and a V and T.

The Thunderbird is an adaptation of one of the Pictographs on Agawa Rock in Lake Superior Provincial Park, and remains today in the newly-designed logo, serving as an ongoing reminder of Paul's influence.

A Member of the Provincial Parliament once remarked that throughout their lives citizens in Ontario can access low-cost recreational pursuits to greatly enrich their quality of life thanks to volunteer efforts like Dr. Paul Syme's. Undoubtedly our hiking trail maps and indeed the quality of life in our region would look very different were it not for 'Father Trail'. Paul's legacy is indeed still alive and strong.

Memory from long-time VTA member Gail Jones:

"I remember meeting Paul for the first time around 1985 when he was Trail Master. He was serious about who he loaned the tools to. I had to promise to take good care of the tools I borrowed and return them promptly. He was very dedicated to the VTA and by the time I met him he had spent 10+ years planning and working on the trail. Paul's passing is sad news. The club benefitted from his dedication and knowledge, not to mention his vision."

Memory from long-time VTA member Susan Graham:

"I realized Paul's passion for the trail early on when I joined the Saulteaux VT Club in 1986. There was trail maintenance planned for a segment east of the Soo in June, at the height of blackfly season. We split into 2 groups and worked towards the middle from either end of the section. I was in a group with Paul and Betty Nassoiiy.



It was very warm and the blackflies were awful. Betty and I were chatting as we worked (of course!), and kept getting blackflies in our mouths. When we got to the halfway point, the other group was nowhere to be seen. It was getting late, and we still had an hour's drive or so to get home. Paul wanted to finish the job though, so we kept going, finally returning to the vehicles hot and tired only to find a note from Tom Allinson in the other group reading 'Union rules said they couldn't work beyond 4 pm', so they had packed it in and gone home! With Paul as our leader, we had persisted, eaten lots of blackflies, but got the job done! That was when I realized Paul's dedication.

Paul was very proud of what had been accomplished with the Voyageur Trail over the years, and today we are enjoying the fruits of his labours. That's a pretty wonderful legacy, and appreciated by many."

Judy Falkins' memories:

"I especially enjoyed doing work parties on the trail, and did many with Paul in the 1970's and 1980's. I recall

he also worked tirelessly behind the scenes to preserve the trail route from conflicting activities."

Peter Stinnissen's memories:

[Peter was long-time President of the Michipicoten Club, making significant contributions to its early development. He also prepared the descriptive text for the Coastal Trail in Lake Superior Provincial Park, which still appears in the Voyageur Hiking Trail Guidebook.]

"Paul didn't hector anyone or try to 'sell' people on the idea of a trail. He simply stated what he wanted to do and a group of followers fell in behind him. Paul was a man of few words. He often communicated a great deal by raising an eyebrow or tilting his head."

Dieter Ropke's memories:

[Dieter was Treasurer of the VTA for some 30 years. He helped draft the original Constitution for the Association in 1975. Here he reflects on some of the challenges encountered and accomplishments achieved by Paul.]

Under the leadership of Paul, the trail became a reality with the enthusiastic support of many avid volunteers and hikers

inspired and led by Paul.

Tom Allinson, Steve Taylor, Ernie Pringle, Father Megan, Ian Morrison are a few of the many who played major roles over the years. All now deceased, the gaps they left have been filled by others, and the trail lives on.

Like so many changes in all phases of our lives, the VTA has also been subjected to such. Over the decades much of the original land ownership has changed and subsequent owners often did not share our vision and approach. Nevertheless, we are blessed with many devoted landowners, along with members who found alternative routes and continued the trail in the spirit of 'Father Trail'. While Paul was recognized with an award by the Province, an award submission to the City of Sault Ste. Marie was not approved, denying him another honour so many of us feel he deserved."

If you have a memory of Paul or Jack, or photographs of them on the trail or otherwise engaging in work for or with the Voyageur Trail Association, that you would like to share, please email us at:

info@voyageurtrail.ca.

REMEMBERING JACK DUNNING

Steve Dominy

On October 19, 2020 the Voyageur Trail Association lost another long-time member and volunteer, Jack Dunning. Jack and his wife Paula joined the Association in its early days and their membership support never waned. Ever loyal to our group, in early 2011 Jack responded to an appeal for volunteers from Saulteaux Club President Gayle Phillips.

Part of his response read:

"I think you must have suddenly become psychic, though I assume this is a general appeal. We've been traveling and I just got around to reading the latest issue of the newsletter yesterday. I have on my list of things to get done today to write that I had seen all the requests for help and that I would be happy to start getting involved!"

I'm happy to get involved in almost any aspect, but do have some problems. We're away 2-3 months every winter, and we never seem to get a summer schedule organized enough to even get on more than the very occasional hike. So, something that involved regular meetings might not be best, though I could probably get to most of them except January-April. As you know, I also have done newsletter stuff. I also designed and still maintain the Sylvan Circle web pages, as well as my own, so I could help out there. I'm also happy to get involved in the guidebook work - no special mapping experience but fairly familiar with GPS use."

Jack's offer came just as the Association was launching a project to update the Association's website, and this was where his focus was directed. While I had known Jack and Paula casually over the

years, with Jack's offer I had the pleasure of getting to know them better, especially Jack. I quickly learned that once Jack turned his mind to something, he gave it 110%. Within a few weeks Jack had become fully engaged in the project, sharing mock-ups of page layouts and designs with Dawn Elmore and me. He always found solutions to the many problems that inevitably arose as he fulfilled the role of webmaster. For example, he freely admitted at the outset that the on-line store component of the website was not something he was familiar with.

Undaunted, he undertook to teach himself the ins and outs of setting up an e-commerce site, and successfully conquered that challenge.

Jack always sought elegant solutions to complex problems, avoiding (in his words) "killing mosquitoes with grenades". The resultant new website he created served us well for many years.

In 2013, as the VTA was gearing up for its 40th anniversary celebration the following year, a trail blitz took place that involved concerted efforts to organize work parties and tune up all our trails.

As Jack and Paula lived not far from part of the Echo Ridges Section, they hosted a potluck meal to launch the blitz, and provided a camping area for volunteers. I fondly recall the tour of Jack's pottery studio, which exhibited another of his many talents. Jack will be dearly missed by all who had the privilege to know him.





Voyageur Trail Association

The Voyageur Trail Association (VTA) was founded in 1973 with a vision to work with volunteers and partner organizations to build a continuous wilderness-style hiking trail from Sudbury through Sault Ste. Marie to Thunder Bay, a distance of some 1,100 km paralleling the rugged Northern Ontario shores of Lake Huron and Lake Superior.

The Voyageur Trail is a true wilderness trail, some remote or little used sections may be difficult due to fallen trees or regrowth. Use at your own risk.

The Voyageur Trail Association is a non-profit, charitable organization. REG.
#119261923RR0001.

The Voyageur Trail Association is comprised of a Coordinating Council with elected members representing the Association's membership at regional and national stakeholder levels through organizations like Hike Ontario.

The Coordinating Council

The Coordinating Council of the Voyageur Trails Association is comprised of the Executive, Director-at-Large, and the Directors. At the 2020 AGM the following positions were filled:

President: Carole Blaquiére
Vice President - East: Martin Turner
Vice President - Central: Mark Crofts
Vice President - West: Matt Borutski
Past President - Susan Graham
Treasurer: Kees van Frankenhuyzen
Secretary: Danaé Ingram
Publicity Director: Vacant
Membership: Chris Kuntz
Trails Master: Doug Elson
Hike Ontario Rep: Harvey Lemelin

Director-At-Large: Carolyn Reid

Social Media: Kelsey Johansen
Newsletter Editor: Kelsey Johansen
Trails Data Manager: Heath Bishop
Insurance: Larry Gringorten
Guidebook Chair: Steve Dominy
Webmaster: Sandra Turgeon

If you are interested in fulfilling one of these roles, please email us at:
info@voyageurtrail.ca.

Clubs

The **Saulteaux VTA Club** was the first Voyageur Trail Club established in 1974. Headquartered in Sault Ste. Marie this Club champions the Saulteaux, Desbarats, Thessalon and Echo Ridge sections of the Trails.

The 44 km **Penewobikong section** of the Voyageur Trail was developed by original member Norm Ledietz who maintained the trail from 1973 to 1995. Today this section from Granary to Iron Bridge is maintained by a small dedicated team of three who make up the Penewobikong Hiking Club.

The **Coueurs de Bois VTA Club** is headquartered in Elliot Lake, Ontario, Canada and stewards the Coueurs de Bois section of the Trail.

The **Marathon VTA Club**, which is comprised of the newly established Group of Seven Trail as well as the Picnic Table Lookout trail, Hawks Ridge Trail and Lunam Lake Lookout Trail is comprised of regional stakeholders including Pic River First Nation, Parks Canada and the Marathon Economic Development Corporation.

Spanning, Terrace Bay to Rossport, the **Casque Isles VTA Club** derives its name from John Bigsby's 1823 appraisal of Superior's north shore from the top of Pic Island. This Club manages the Casque Isles Trail in conjunction with regional partners like Ontario Parks.

On September 1st, 2012 the Voyageur Trail Association welcomed its first new Club in over 30 years. The **Nor'wester Voyageur Trail Club** spans from the Casque Isles Trail VTA Club north through the communities of Nipigon, Red Rock, Dorion, Hurkett, Shuniah, Thunder Bay and Neebing to the Ontario / Minnesota border at Pigeon River.

Become a Member Today!

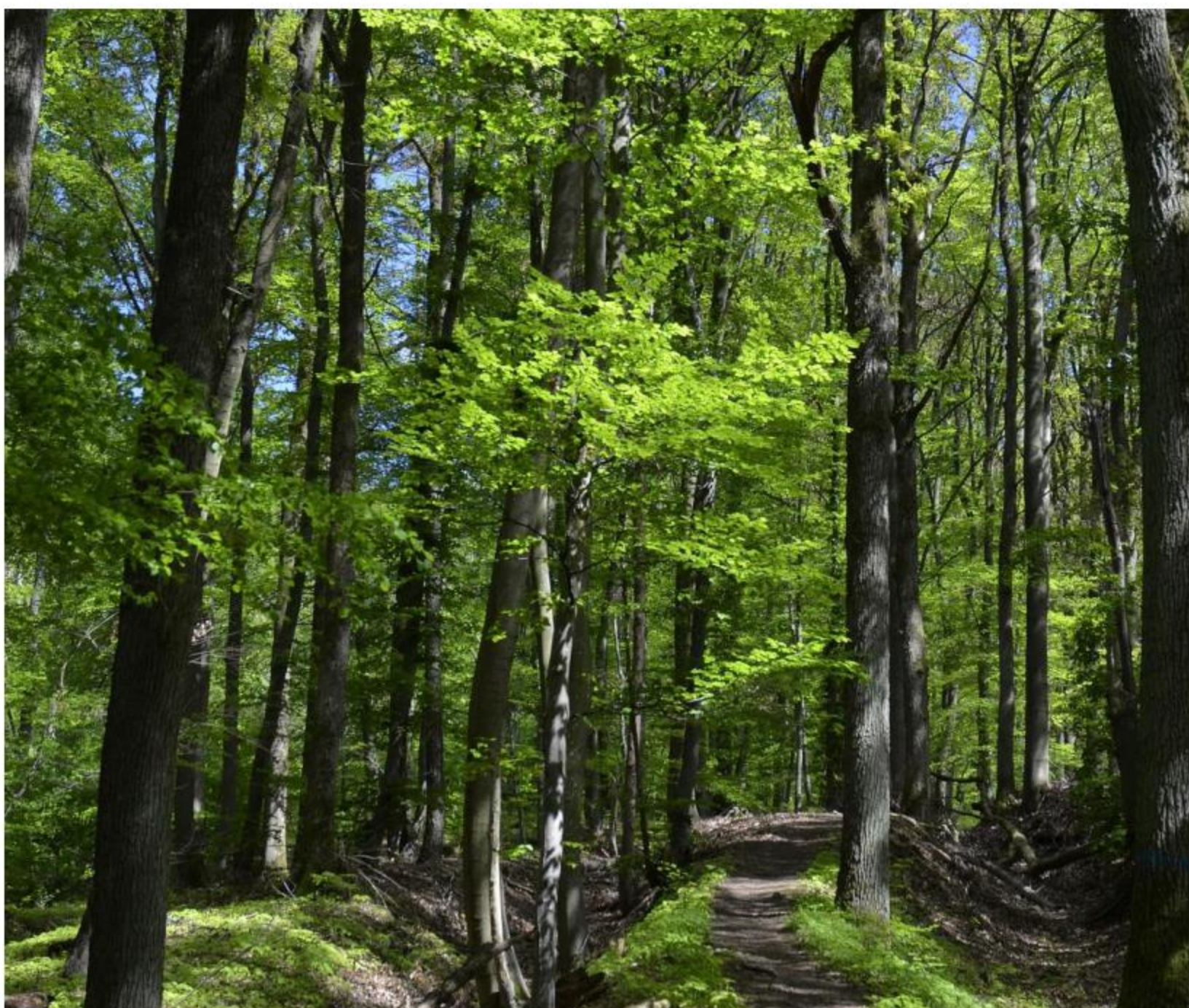
Purchasing a VTA membership demonstrates your support for the vision and work of the Voyageur Trail Association. As a not-for-profit organization, the VTA depends on donations, volunteers, and membership revenue to support its operations. Members are eligible for exclusive discounts at participating businesses along the trail route and enjoy voting privileges at annual meetings. Most importantly, purchasing a membership means you have played an important part in the development of a 1,100 km hiking trail through some of Ontario's most splendid wilderness. A paid membership supports trail maintenance, insurance for our guided hikes and other outings, like work parties, as well as production of the VTA Newsletter and Guidebook.

Memberships can be purchased for either a one- or three-year duration, and include Individual and Family (all individuals residing at the same address) memberships. Discounted Student memberships are also available (for 1- or 3-year durations).

Memberships can be purchased on our website at <https://www.voyageurtrail.ca/memberships/> or visit our online store to purchase the official Voyageur Trail Association Guidebook, or trail guides. You can also purchase advertising space in our Newsletter, Guidebook or on our Website, or make a charitable donation to the Association at <https://www.voyageurtrail.ca/shop/>.

Thank you to all our amazing Community Partners, Land Owners, Trail Adopters, Clubs, Volunteers and Members.

We couldn't do it without you!



TRAIL RUNNING:

Finding a new challenge and a new appreciation for the trail

Danaé Ingram



VTA Coordinating Council Secretary, Danaé Ingram found community and a whole new appreciation for the trail, when she ditched sidewalks and side streets in favour of trail running.

I have been a casual runner since 2012, but only in the last two years have I discovered the tight-knit, creative and welcoming trail running community right in my back yard. Clocking kilometers while skipping over roots, climbing steep inclines (admission: I frequently resort to “enthusiastic hiking” for these bits), and taking pauses for amazing views are all part of the experience.

The trails are a welcome change compared to the usual sidewalks and side streets I had been accustomed to.

The act of running becomes much more engaging, body and mind, as you navigate a much less predictable terrain. From my first trail run, I was quickly hooked. I had signed up for the inaugural [Ultra Trail Stokely Creek](#) event in Fall 2019, looking to take on the 15 km distance.

The race director, Nicholas Brash of Bear in Mind Running, was hosting training runs over the summer to help introduce the sport to those who were interested like me but who were not quite sure what they were getting in to. Nick himself is an accomplished Ultra runner, having raced internationally, bagging distances in the 100 km categories (yes, you read that right!!).

I questioned my sanity as I woke up early to be out at Stokely for a 5 km group run, but it was an enthusiastic and inclusive community of people I found. Luckily, there are no shortages of trails to be found here!

If you're like me, signing up for a race is great motivation and there is no shortage of options around Sault Ste Marie. You can take on distances from 5 km - 170 km at the incredibly fun Ultra Trail Stokely Creek event, held annually in October.



This race features some of the best refuel stations you'll find and the party is ON at the top of King Mountain (and it's downhill from there - you did it!). Or, test your quads with intense climbs at [Defeat the Peat](#) (formerly the No Hassholes Left Behind race), held at Rabbit Blanket Campground each year in Lake Superior Provincial Park. They'll cheer you to the finish line with a beer ready to go after all that effort!



From her first trail run, Danaé Ingram was hooked due to the increased engagement required to navigate less predictable terrain and the scenic nature of the trails.

A family favourite and a great introductory race is the Mountain Maple Run each Spring on St. Joseph's Island - do a small 500 m race with the kids after a 5 km or 10 km trail run. If you aren't interested in racing, the [Sault Stryders](#) organize regular summer meet-ups at Hiawatha for 5 km group runs.

This year, like most events, nearly all races were canceled due to COVID. Ever resilient, new goals were set by many runners. Some accomplished the distances, that they had planned to originally race, on their own. Others created "Virtual" events, where runners ran the trail course on their own or with someone in their bubble and reported their finishing times to the organizers.

In a year of uncertainty and stress, the community aspect of trail running found a way to thrive still.

There is nothing so satisfying as a run through the woods and that was very apparent in 2020!

It seems well agreed upon that beyond the physical benefits, the mental rewards from finishing a trail are huge.

My next-favourite reward for finishing a trail? Poutine. If I can make a recommendation, the Voyageurs Lodge & Cookhouse on Lake Superior makes an amazing one! It's a tried-and-true victory meal!



Ingram's muddy trail running shoes.



Danaé and her children at the St. Joseph's Island Maple Mountain Run.



SNOWSHOES: The lesser of two evils

Mark Crofts

Sure, you can ski parts of the Voyageur Trail...but really, snowshoes are the way to go. They are a perfect marvel of engineering...and by 'they' I mean the traditional wood and gut snowshoes. We owe a huge debt to the First Nations peoples, as for getting through deep fluffy Algoma lake effect powder, traditional shoes have no equal. For that, and sentimental reasons, traditional shoes are the only type I use. These days we use snowshoes for recreation...a sort of pleasure cruise through seas of deep snow. The journals of those who have gone before make it clear that snowshoes were a decidedly utilitarian device. Alexander Henry was a fur trader who operated in the Lake Superior area. His journal "Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Territories 1760-1776" is a fascinating read.

Henry describes a two-day outing he made between Mackinac and Sault Ste. Marie (the year 1762):

"I was troubled by a disorder called the 'snowshoe evil' proceeding from an unusual strain on the tendons of the leg occasioned by the weight of the snowshoes, and brings on inflammation. The remedy prescribed ... is that of laying a piece of lighted touchwood on the part and leaving it there till the flesh is burnt to the nerve. Though I had seen it attended ... in others, I did not think proper to make upon myself"

From personal experience I'd suggest that the late winter snows bring the highest risk of the "Evil". On one fateful journey we departed on a cold crisp morning and went 7 kilometers with relative ease. As we lounged around the lunch fire the sun gained strength, warming our faces. It was a beautiful late winter day. The chickadees were flitting about signing their spring song. We lingered. All was right in our little part of the world. Alas, a 7-kilometer hike in usually necessitates a 7-kilometer hike out. As the snow warms it sticks to the webbing on the traditional shoes and clogs the metal claw on the modern shoes. Actually, "cements" is the better descriptor. Either way, with each step you are lifting an increasing weight of snow. With each step the "Snowshoe Evil" lurks. The later kilometers of the return trek were pure agony. Using a sturdy stick, on each step I tried to knock off what snow clods would release. Over the last kilometer I had to grab my wool pants just above the knee and use my arm to help lift my leg. Why not just take the snowshoes off you may ask? Well, that same day I learned another lesson. When the snow warms the base disappears. Without the snowshoes I sank well past my knee. The snowshoes proved a relative salvation, merely bringing on the "lesser of two evils".

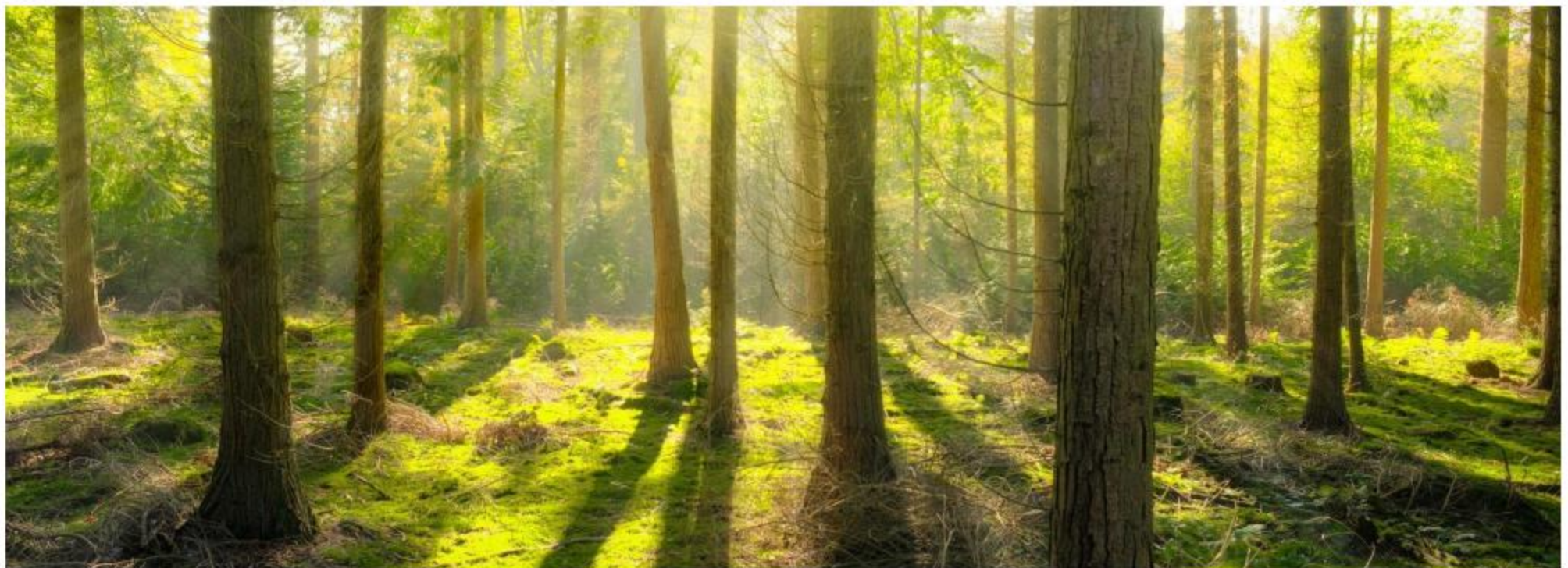
As you enjoy the Voyageur Trail in the later stages of this winter, as you surely should; pace yourself. Avoid the "snowshoe evil"!

Perhaps the foregoing anecdote from Alexander Henry will help put whatever aches you may feel after your snowshoe outing, into perspective!



CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS SUMMER 2021 ISSUE

If you are interested in contributing to our Summer 2021 Issue, please contact Kelsey Johansen (Newsletter Editor) at KelseyMJohansen@gmail.com. Each issue contains a regional trail feature, highlighting an area of the trail, so if there is a trail that your Club maintains please be in touch. We also accept contributions highlight recent outings, upcoming events and trail user information updates. Deadline for submissions for the Summer 2020 Issue is May 1st, 2021.



SAULTEAUX CLUB:

Spring Trail Closure Notice

Mark Crofts

Members and trail users in the Sault Ste. Marie Area should be aware of the following Spring Trail Closures.

Stokely area

Stokely Creek Lodge and the ski trails are closed this winter.

The Stokely parking lot will be CLOSED and will not be ploughed. Since the Voyageur Trail through private properties adjoining the Stokely Creek Lodge property simply led to the closed Stokely trails, these trails are also be closed until further notice.

Do not use Stokely A2 or Stokely A3 on McGaughan Road or any trail connected thereto.

The Steve Taylor Commemorative Trail (north of Robertson Cliffs) is open ONLY to the north end of Algoma Highland Conservancy property. Thus, if you hike in from the Robertson Lake Road you must hike out the same way. The Robertson Lake Road is ploughed this winter as far as Robertson Lake. This will give easy access to the Algoma Highlands Conservancy trails, including Robertson Cliffs.

Be careful though, the road is a popular snowmobile trail and if your car wheels venture off the packed / ploughed portion you may sink up to the axle!

Hiawatha Fat Bike and Ski Trails

The Voyageur Trail crosses the fat bike and ski trails in a few spots.

A reminder not to walk along the ski / fat bike trails.

Peoples Road

Blue blazes have been placed from the end of Peoples Road, north to the junction with the main (white blazed) trail.

The blue blazes signify that the "No trespassing" signs placed by the landowner do not apply to Voyageur Trail users.

Remember the VTA Hikers Code however ... and stay on the marked trail to avoid trespassing off the trail.

Hwy 552 access to the Jewelweed Loop

All Voyageur Trail users are reminded to use CAUTION accessing the trail from Hwy 552 ("Jewelweed Loop" etc.) as portions of the trail run along a logging road that is presently being used for a log-haul.

You can park at the push out just off the highway, but don't block access for the logging vehicles.

Roads ploughed to out of the way places

We have reports that the Echo Lake Rd. is being ploughed to the Upper Echo River, with limited roadside parking available south of the bridge.

This offers access to the eastbound trail south along the river and the westbound trail (largely on snowmobile trail) north of Echo Lake.

We have a report that the Gros Cap trail access road is ploughed as well as the parking areas.

A reminder that your VTA membership does not come with a CAA membership so don't get your vehicle stuck in the snow.

VTA TRAIL USERS CODE

All users of the Voyageur Trail must abide by this code.

1. Hike only along marked routes. Do not take shortcuts.
2. Do not climb fences.
3. Respect the privacy of people living along the trail.
4. Leave the trail cleaner than you found it—carry out all litter.
5. Light cooking fires at official campsites only. Drench fires after use. (Better still, carry a lightweight stove.)
6. Leave flowers and plants for others to enjoy.
7. Do not damage live trees or strip off bark.
8. Keep dogs under control (leash if necessary) and follow your club's guidelines concerning dogs.
9. Protect and do not disturb wildlife.
10. Leave only your thanks and take nothing but photographs.

Discount for VTA Members in Sault Ste Marie

Don't forget that VTA members receive a 10% discount at Joe's Sports and The Shoe Fits.

VOYAGEUR TRAIL APP IN DEVELOPMENT

Steve Dominy

*Where am I on the trail?
How far is it to the next access point?
Has this trail been rerouted recently?
Are there a lot of elevation changes on this trail?*

Answers to these questions and others will be at the fingertips of future trail users when carrying a Smartphone or tablet App. Using the *Ondago App*, Voyageur Trail maps along with basic descriptions and photos will be available electronically when on the trail. Using the GPS capability on the device, you will see where you are on the trail, even when outside network coverage. When reroutes, closures and other changes are made to the trail, these will quickly appear in the App, ensuring that trail users always have current information. An elevation profile of each trail will help with trip planning.

At its September 2020 meeting, the Coordinating Council voted to support development of this App as an alternative to the paper trail map. This is the next stage in the evolution of the trail guides that the VTA has produced for some 45 years. Versions 1 and 2 of the 'guidebook' were paper-bound, mimeographed pages containing hand-drawn maps. In the 1990's the guidebook evolved to a vinyl binder using official topographic maps with trails added manually (Version 3). In 2007 the next stage in the evolution saw coloured maps developed using GIS software with geo-referenced trails (Version 4). Development of an App will build on the GIS maps, adding features that can further improve the experience for trail users when on an outing: voila Version 5.0 of our trail guide!

Many trail users completed the guidebook survey in late summer, where we hinted at this potential project. Thank you for your feedback! The survey results helped support our decision to move forward. Over 80% of respondents indicated they would or might use such a trail App, and over 90% think it is important to always have access to the latest trail updates.

The decision to choose *Ondago* was made after extensive research of various trail Apps. We believe this product is well-suited to our situation. In particular, this App will address a number of safety-related concerns.

- We live in a region of the province where cell phone/network coverage is not continuous, so having the capability to show your location when offline is a critical feature.
- Our trails undergo frequent changes (reroutes, closures, newly-developed trails, etc.) leading to the guidebook becoming quickly outdated; the feature of putting updates into users' hands quickly is important.
- With some trails being maintained irregularly, which can result in missing or obscured blazes or signs, overgrown or flooded footpaths, etc., having the latest trail route and related information in hand ensures users will not lose the trail.
- Maps will include an elevation profile for the trail, so users will be able to assess it against their physical abilities before venturing out.

Ondago (pronounced like 'On 'da Go') is a Canadian-made product that is used by many trails' organizations in North America, including several of our sister hiking clubs in southern Ontario. The plan is to charge a one-time nominal fee (to be determined) for downloading maps and lifetime updates, and to sell advertising. For those who still prefer to use a paper map (with or without the App), we will be working with the *Ondago* developers to offer print-ready maps.

It will be a busy few months as we get this App up and running (the aim is to have the first maps ready by summer 2021). Trail routes and access points will have to be verified. Descriptive information will need to be edited down from what now appears in the guidebook. New trail photos will be needed. Advertisers must be solicited. A marketing campaign will be developed and implemented to promote the use of the App.

For those thinking of stepping forward to volunteer with the Voyageur Trail Association, this is a great time to get involved in an exciting project! Let us know how you are willing and able to help by messaging us through our social media outlets (Facebook, Instagram), by emailing info@voyageurtrail.ca, or by calling/texting Steve Dominy (705-206-3538).

POETRY ON THE TRAIL: Lake Superior, Reminded of Kin

Bill Cole

I was out on the Tom Allinson Side Trail today. As I hiked along the Lake Superior shoreline enjoying the solitude, the beautiful sunshine and the moderate temperatures for a February morning, I was thinking about a friend who recently challenged me to come up with haiku poems and accompanying photos.

Lake Superior!

What are we here for?
The morning sun on water.
Lake Superior!

Stones on the shoreline.
Wearing their winter chapeaus.
We long for springtime.

Trees in the forest.
Some are tall, many fallen.
We all play our parts.

Reminded of Kin

Reminded of kin.
Love of puns - on a haiku!
Dad and grandfather.



Reminded of Kin is dedicated to my late father, Robert Lewis Cole, and his late father, Robert Mason Cole. Both loved puns and passed that love on to me.



THE LAKE SUPERIOR COASTAL TRAIL: Discovering it's Magic

Dawn White with photos by Wesley White

The northern coast of Lake Superior is home to several of Canada's most beautiful and challenging long distance hiking trails. These trails weave along the rocky and sandy shore of the largest freshwater lake in the world. The easternmost trail is the 65-kilometer Coastal Trail in Lake Superior Provincial Park. Part of the Voyageur Trail system, this linear trail follows the Lake Superior shoreline from Chalfant Cove to Agawa Bay between the communities of Sault Ste. Marie and Wawa.

The Ontario Parks website describes the Coastal Trail as "*the most challenging and demanding trail in the park.*" It certainly can be challenging, particularly on windy or rainy days when the boulders and rocky shoreline are wet. Rated as very demanding, hikers should be well-prepared for no cell service, rapidly changing weather conditions, and tough ascents and descents. Trekking poles are a must in this terrain!

Many hikers complete the Coastal Trail as a multi-day backpacking adventure. However, the trail's proximity to the trans-Canada highway makes day hiking on portions of the trail an attractive alternative. Day hikes are relatively easy to plan – decide on a section, fill your daypack with water, lunch, and other supplies, and grab your trekking poles. Day hikes are an excellent option for families looking to explore the area, or for those who wish to explore the wonders of the trail while having a warm and comfortable bed to sleep in at night.

This summer, a group of four of us explored a beautiful 5-kilometer section between the Barrett and Sand Rivers. This section has it all – huge rocky outcrops, cliffs, boulder hopping, sand and pebble beaches, and lush forest. Shortly after the highway fades from view, it feels as if you have entered another world. The horizon stretches away and fades into a foggy haze, the pine needles are bright green and dripping with dew, and the bands of colour in the rock reflect in the clear water of Lake Superior. The varieties of lichens and mosses are fascinating, filling the forest with bright colours and unique textures. This is a place where a child's imagination will thrive.

Day hikes on the Coastal Trail require a bit more preparation than urban walks. They are best attempted on calm, warm weather days (particularly when bringing children). On a warm, calm day you can end your hike with a refreshing swim and relax on a pristine sand beach.





Included are a few helpful tips when planning day hikes on the Coastal Trail.

Tip 1: Plan your parking before you go.

To access the section from Sand River to Barrett River, there is a parking lot at Sand River where you can pull off the highway and park safely. In many places, it is possible to bring two vehicles and park one at the end point of your hike. That said, the Coastal Trail is so unique and amazing hiking out-and-back can be a completely different experience each way. Always plan ahead and remember parking is not allowed on the shoulder of Highway 17.

Tip 2: Wear proper footwear.

No matter which section of the Coastal Trail you hike you will need to hop a few boulders and navigate uneven rocky terrain. Running shoes will not give you the grip or ankle support you need for this trail.

Tip 3: Stay on the trail.

This may seem obvious; however, it is super important. Where there are trail markers, and a clear trail can be seen, do not stray from the trail. In some areas, there are cliffs and steep embankments very close that you cannot see through the trees.

It is tempting for children to want to explore as they hike. There is a part of the trail between Barrett and Sand River where there is a hidden cliff only feet from the trail. There are also holes in the ground with waterfalls flowing beneath.

These are both amazing trail features to see from safe ground, but not features you want to mistakenly wander into. Stay on the trail and teach your children to stay on the trail too.

There are fantastic detailed descriptions of the Coastal Trail in the VTA Guidebook.

Spend some time this winter reading about the trail and planning your 2021 day-hike adventures!



FOLLOW US

www.voyageurtrail.ca

[@voyagertrailassociation](https://www.instagram.com/voyagertrailassociation)



THE VOYAGEUR TRAIL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

