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# Ruminations From the President

Hello, and welcome to the VTA Spring Newsletter! Spring is a season of renewal and anticipation of the summer ahead. You don't have to wait until summer to go hiking, spring is a wonderful time to get out and watch nature recover from a long and cold winter.

Spring is also a time for us to prepare the trails for the upcoming season as well. There is no better way to learn the trail systems than to tag along with a group on a maintenance outing. You do not need any special skills, just a good attitude and a willingness to help. It is

helpful to us as trail managers to hike with someone new to the trail as well. Not only do we get to explain why we do things in a certain way, but insight from someone new can help us to improve the experience of hiking for everyone.

Remember that the first principle of Leave No Trace is to plan ahead and prepare for any outing. Look over the trail on the Ondago app before heading out, know your limitations, dress for the weather, and leave a trip plan with someone before you leave. After all these years of hiking, sometimes with groups and sometimes alone, my wife

will always know where I am going and when I should be back. I like to dally in spots as well, so I know the importance of reporting in if I am going to be a bit late!

Enjoy every minute that you are on the trails this season. Be courteous to others and realize that all of us have our own pace to hike at. Be a trail angel if need be and help out where you can. If you meet up with me and it seems like I am a bad dancer or trying to fly, it's just my way of shooing the bugs away.

See you on the trail! ■

— Matt Borutski, VTA President



*Spring trail maintenance crew at Tier Lake.*



*Maintenance crew on the Beaver Loop Trail and the main trail to Mabel Lake.*



*Trail maintenance crew takes a break at Lunam Lookout.*



*The Saulteaux crew ready to work!*



Featuring the 'Your Current Location' and 'Share My Location' features in the Ondago app.

## Exploring the Ins and Outs

### Using Voyageur Trail digital maps in Ondago to your best advantage

By Steve Dominy, Trail Maps Coordinator

As reported in the fall 2022 newsletter by Matt Borutski, the VTA released maps for some 500 km of our trails in spring of 2022. In April 2023, we released updated maps that reflect numerous changes and additions that have occurred over the past year. We also corrected a few inevitable errors that were discovered by our users. We have also updated the Ondago tutorial (on VTA website under Trails | Trail maps) to read about more features.

While 2022 trail closures and major reroutes were quickly reported to local members by VTA clubs, the affected maps have now been updated. We are still in the learning phase with these maps, trying to strike a balance between trail safety and additional mapping costs. As a nonprofit association, the VTA strives to keep costs to a minimum, directing our limited resources where they can be of greatest benefit for trail users. Updating trails involves work by our map provider (Ondago), for which we pay them. We believe the new (2023) notification feature will help us better achieve this balance (keep reading to learn more).

#### Private land concerns

Without the consent of landowners across our trail system, the Voyageur Trail would not exist. We must always respect the wishes of our landowners to ensure that these critical relationships remain strong. Voyageur Trail users are reminded to only use marked trails that appear on updated maps, and to always heed signs such as No Parking and Trail Closed.

Some landowners have erected No Trespassing and/or Keep Out signs at trail access points. If unsure whether these notices apply to Voyageur Trail users, check the interactive maps. Members can assess the maps via the website (login to your account) or via the Ondago app (enter the 2023 passcode provided). Select the trail section you want and click on a Trail Access (e.g., A1) icon for details. Seasonal trail closures are in place on some trails, and the warning signs may be missing. Again, before venturing out be sure to check the interactive map (on your computer or device) for current information.

#### What has changed in 2023?

Our interactive maps now reflect new or modified trails and points of interest, recent trail closures, reroutes, new trails, and new photos. New 'Seasonal Trail Closure' icons have been added, affecting some shared use ski trails. All updates are available to members on both the Ondago app and online after logging in to their VTA account. We look forward to adding new trail maps as they are completed.

GPX files have also been updated for those looking to also add the updated trail tracks to their personal GPS maps, Google Maps, etc. Note that GPX files do not include detailed trail information such as parking details, seasonal trail closures, or points of interest. Those details are available on the interactive maps and PDF versions. New PDF maps are in the works as we move to having printable map versions for all trail sections.



New for 2023 is a messaging feature in the app. Members will receive occasional notifications of trail changes and other relevant information directly to their device. Watch for these and let us know what you think.

### Other features

A feature you may not know about in the app is the Your Current Location function, whereby you tap on the blue dot (your location) when you are on or near the trail and you will see the latitude and longitude coordinates of this location at the bottom of the screen. Trail users may then wish to take a screenshot of the map to save these coordinates for future reference. This feature could come in handy if you ever need to (heaven forbid!) be rescued while on the trail.

Another lesser-known app feature is Share My Location, which allows you to grant other app users (VTA members) access to see your location on the trail in real time. You might find this feature handy, for example:

- If your group has to split up, and you need to know where the rest of the group is.
- Your spouse or friend, still at home, wishes to monitor your progress along the trail.

The graphic on the previous page illustrates how these two features can be used in the app. We'd love to hear about your own experiences as you try them.

Remember that these location features work offline using your phone's built-in GPS, so having a good cell phone signal and using a data plan is not a worry as long as you have downloaded the maps in advance of your outing.



### Expressing our gratitude

We wish to thank our latest sponsors, Evolugen and Tourism Sault Ste. Marie, for their generous financial contributions towards the 2023 map products. We also thank Destination Northern Ontario and our many sponsors in 2022 for helping us finance the launch of the digital maps.

Our objective is to keep the Voyageur Trail safe so trail users have an enjoyable experience. We encourage users to report trail issues they encounter on their outings. We will address reported problems as quickly as possible and, if appropriate, we'll send a notification to map users.

As always, we welcome feedback about your experience with the app and online map products. Please send comments to Steve at [sdominy1203@gmail.com](mailto:sdominy1203@gmail.com) or call/text 705-206-3538. Happy trails! ■





*The landscapes the trail crew enjoy daily are breathtaking. Port Munro looking out to Pic Island on the Group of Seven Lake Superior Trail.*

## Building a trail offers engagement with the natural landscapes behind iconic Group of Seven paintings

The Group of Seven Lake Superior (the G7 Trail) offers its users a unique experience – the opportunity to trace the footsteps taken 100 years ago by Canada's renowned Group of Seven artists and see the actual sites that inspired many of their most famous paintings. The founding members of the Group of Seven made numerous painting trips to the North Shore of Lake Superior and the Marathon area between 1921 and 1928. The beauty of the landscape kept drawing them back, and the result was hundreds of sketches and paintings.

Today, local residents and tourists are similarly drawn to the lake's coastal shores, excited to walk the G7 Trail and see firsthand many of the scenes immortalized in their iconic artwork. The trail has become a major tourist attraction and a boon to the economy of Marathon and the broader region. Bringing the trail to life has been a multi-year project, coordinated by the Group of Seven Lake Superior Trail Association, a not-for-profit organization working in partnership with the Town of Marathon and Biigtigong Nishnaabeg (Ojibways of the Pic River). Currently, 42 kilometres of trail have been developed, and the plan is to ultimately create a 60-kilometre long trail connecting Pukaskwa National Park to Neys Provincial Park.

In the summer of 2022, Ethan Harmer was part of the field crew working on the trail.

Ethan, age 18 and from Marathon, was hired through funding provided by the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association's Youth Employment Experience program. The program, funded by the Government of Canada, helps young people job gain experience and new skills and allows parks and recreation organizations to boost their capacity.



*Ethan Harmer*

"The CPRA funding helped to accomplish a lot over the summer," says Kirsten Spence, Project Coordinator with the G7 Lake Superior Trail Association. "Ethan was made Assistant Trail Crew Leader, supervising half the crew. Being able to divide the team into two groups made us more efficient and very productive," says Kirsten. "That summer, we added seven kilometres of developed trail – rebuilding existing sections and cutting 4.2 kilometres of new trail." Ethan also helped maintain the 35 km of existing trail and built foot bridges and other trail features. "I grew up out being outdoors, and having an outside job all summer was amazing," he says.

"I learned a lot about actual trail construction and how much is involved – different tasks like cutting into a hill to build a pathway and building bridges over creeks to allow water to pass through."

Ethan says he enjoyed the work and appreciates all that he learned – knowledge that will serve him well in the future. He is studying the electrical trades at Confederation College in Thunder Bay. "I learned about team work and about how to make quick decisions when the unexpected happens," he says. "I also learned communication skills, very important when you are in the bush and depending on each other to remain safe."

Kirsten appreciates that mentorship is an important part of the CPRA grant, guiding the employer and employee to collaborate on a development plan and to track progress towards goals. "The mentorship model adds structure and elevates the importance of the job experience," she says. "Through this job, Ethan was able to develop solid planning skills; work planning is crucial when travelling long distances and working in remote locations. He also learned how to safely handle machinery and received certification in chainsaw operation. These are all skills that are highly transferrable to other jobs and environments." ■





*Overlooking Lake Superior on the Mount Gwynne segment, Casque Isles Hiking Trail.*

## Local students learn new woodworking skills as part of Casque Isles Trail project

Lake Superior High School (LSHS) co-op students in Terrace Bay have been learning new skills while building benches for the Casque Isles section of the VTA.

The Casque Isles Club had contacted LSHS in 2020 to inquire about having the Carpentry class construct the benches, and the materials were purchased and delivered to LSHS. With Covid-19 school closures and virtual learning being the norm shortly thereafter, the project was at a standstill for two years.

In 2022, Shop class teacher Maurice Thiboutot took up the project again. There was enough material to build seven benches. Dado and rabbet joints made the design particularly challenging. Safe use of the woodworking tools was also a focus. With co-op student Brett Semple assisting, the construction began. The students rose to the challenge and produced all the benches by June of 2022.

Thiboutot has expressed his pride in his students and says that Semple played a huge role in seeing the project to completion. The Carpentry and Tech classes have done other work in the community and seeing the benches finished is very rewarding for everyone involved.

All the sites for the benches have been carefully selected along the Casque Isles Trail, and five of the seven benches have been delivered and installed. Some benches required a snowmachine and boat to get them on site.

The sixth bench has been delivered, again by snowmachine, to the campsite at McLeans Creek, seven kilometres east of Rossport. Delivery of the seventh bench installation will be challenging. The bench will be transferred in pieces to Noname Bay on the Death Valley Segment and hauled up the hill to the Lookout and installed.

The partnership between the Casque Isles Club and LSHS has been very productive. OES teacher Chris Dube was instrumental in writing the grant that purchased the materials, and he actively leads his classes out onto the Casque Isles for experiential learning trips.

Each bench will provide hikers with a beautiful view or a quiet place to sit and enjoy the day. The LSHS Stingers can be proud that they are contributing to the continuation of the trail system and the enjoyment of every user that crosses it. ■





# National Léger Survey Reveals Canadians' Trail Use on the Rise in 2023

*Reprinted with permission*

**T**rans Canada Trail commissioned a new national Léger survey and it has a lot to say!

The survey confirms that trail use continues to increase among Canadians. The wide-ranging survey also polled Canadians on their views on the economic and tourism impacts of trails and on the impact on local businesses including the amount spent while using trails.

The data were released on the eve of the first Parliament Hill Advocacy Days in Ottawa April 17-18. Several key themes emerged from the survey data.

## Trails continue to be popular post-pandemic

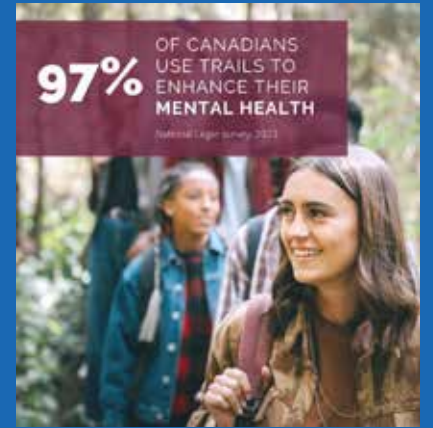
- Overall, 72% of Canadians have used trails in the past 12 months, up slightly from 70 per cent, with 80 per cent of Canadians noting that they intend to use trails in the next year.
- 89% of Canadians agree that trails add value to the quality of life in their community.
- 69% of Canadians said that easy access to trails and outdoor activities have an impact on where they choose to live.

Access to nature and enhancing our mental health are driving our trail use. The top three reasons that respondents identified for using trails include: to be outdoors and get fresh air (98%); to enjoy nature and see beautiful

landscapes (97%) and to enhance mental health and relieve stress (94%).

## Role of trails in combatting climate change, enhancing nature

- The majority of Canadians would consider reducing their car use and would use active transportation (walking or cycling) options instead if trail networks in their community were available and accessible.
  - Of the 85% of Canadians who have a personal vehicle or access to one in their household, 69% said they would consider replacing at least one out of every ten car trips by accessing trails instead. The average of daily trips that could be replaced is close to 50% (4.6 out of 10).
  - 90% of respondents agree that trails allow for nature preservation and conservation.
  - 87% of trail users across Canada do so to minimize their impact on nature and the environment and 93% agree it's important to make nature accessible. 92 per cent of those surveyed feel trails are an important tool to connect people to nature, to biodiversity and to culture.
  - 70% of Canadians are concerned about the impact that the changing climate will have on their trail use and their enjoyment of trail activities.
  - 89% of respondents recognize the importance of trails for preserving greenspace.
- (continued on page 7)*



(continued from page 6)

## Investing in trails benefits the economy

- Over one third (35%) of respondents spent money while using trails in the past twelve months.
- The average spend was \$179 with 25% of users spending more than \$200 per person.
- 83% of respondents say they would support local businesses that in turn contribute to supporting and sustaining trails.
- 76% of respondents believe it is important to support local businesses while using trails.

## Trails tourism is a significant and growing opportunity

- 76% of respondents agree trails make an important contribution in terms of building a tourism economy.
- 56% of respondents said they were likely to include and use trails in their next vacation or travel plans.
- 60% said they were likely to explore Indigenous tourism experiences.

In terms of the role of government in building and maintaining trails, 85% of respondents feel it is important for government to continue to invest in the development and maintenance of trails, with the strongest sentiment in Alberta (88%).

“

*The top three reasons that respondents identified for using trails include: to be outdoors and get fresh air (98%); to enjoy nature and see beautiful landscapes (97%) and to enhance mental health and relieve stress (94%).*

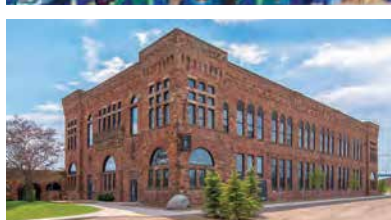
“We know that Canadians greatly value access to nature and the preservation of natural settings and biodiversity. These survey results have reaffirmed this,” said Eleanor McMahon, President & CEO, Trans Canada Trail. “Trails continue to make an important contribution to

people’s lives, and to the enhancement of our mental and physical well-being. We saw Canadians’ trail use increase significantly during the pandemic, and this data confirms that trail use will continue to rise. This is great news.”

“Trans Canada Trail’s role in stewarding Canada’s national trail is given greater impetus when we realize that trails play such an important role in enhancing local businesses and our economy overall. With trail use on the rise, the return – when it comes to investing in trails and in destination development – is quite clear. These results demonstrate the tremendous potential for our continued work on executing Canada’s first National Trails Tourism Strategy, and in particular our recent partnership agreements with Destination Canada and the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada,” McMahon said.

“We look forward to sharing these survey results during our discussions with Members of Parliament over the next few days,” McMahon concluded. ■

## What’s in your backyard?



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# An Unofficial Account of the Official VTA 1987 Annual Meeting

*Reprinted from the Winter 1987/88 Voyageur Trail News*

I've spent some time pondering the mysterious happenings connected with the 1987 VTA Annual Meeting, held in Schreiber on October 24. I believe there were at least three cases of AIDS at the meeting: AIDS short for "Addiction, Insanity, and Dedication with Strength."

The drive to Schreiber is 650 km each way from Blind River, 500 km from Sault Ste. Marie, and 280 km from Wawa. Anyone undertaking such a journey for a two-hour meeting must be addicted to the VTA, and showing at least the first signs of insanity. Paul Syme, Steve Taylor and myself travelled from the Sault leaving at 5:30 pm on Friday.

When we stopped at the Voyageur Restaurant outside Wawa, the staff were most perceptive about how this disease can spread; they didn't come near us with a menu for twenty minutes. The owner kept a wary eye on us from the safety of the bar. Two hours later, we were able to complete our dinner and travel on to the Stinnissens.' Some of us had planned to camp near Marathon or Schreiber, however the campground operators were even more afraid of catching AIDS than the restauraners, and had promptly closed the campground on the excuse that October 23rd was too late to be open for campers.

In order to arrive at Schreiber for 10 o'clock, we got up around 6 am and were joined by Norman Ledietz for a farmhouse-style breakfast. He had driven up from Blind River the previous day. Kristine obviously believed that a nutritious diet without sugar was the best means of combating AIDS. At 7 o'clock the four out-of-towners and Dorothy Egan joined Peter and Kristine for the journey to Schreiber. We all arrived



*Left to right: Paul Syme, Steve Taylor, Lorne Burke, Sherry Burke, Dorothy Egan, Peter Stinnissen.*



*Left to right: Paul Syme, Peter Stinnissen, Steve Taylor, Kristine Stinnissen, Dorothy Egan, Lorne Burke, Sherry Burke.*

## **Editor Notes:**

1. Patrick Capper was VTA President from 1984-86.
2. He now lives near Goderich, Ontario, and is still an active VTA member.
3. The above photos were taken by Patrick during the hike to Mount Gwynne (Casque Isles Hiking Trail) that followed the VTA Annual General Meeting in Schreiber on Oct. 24, 1987. The two dogs are Gypsy and Wolf. These photos did not appear in the original article.

close to scheduled 10 o'clock, but found no trace of the contingent from Thunder Bay. However, Lorne and Sherry Bourke, Dan McGrath and Lauri Haloner from Schreiber met us.

The Thunder Bay group was finally reached at lunch time. They were obviously mortally afraid of catching our condition and gave some excuse about a bad snowstorm, but at Schreiber it was a beautiful cool sunny day without a trace of snow.

Dan and Lauri were nervous about getting Addiction, Insanity and Dedication with Strength. They kept their distance during the meeting and left promptly at noon. Lorne and Sherry were already showing signs of AIDS. Lorne has been the most active member since Heather Jessup – McGrath left town several years ago. He was instrumental in carrying up a rock drill and power plant to the top of Mount Gwynne to install Tom McGrath's memorial plaque.

After the meeting we had a very pleasant lunch at a semi-Chinese restaurant. The Chinese cook only had the courage to enter the kitchen after we had sat down for about half-an-hour, and only the waitress dared to go near the nine of us eating there. Obviously another indication that our AIDS was showing.

After lunch we had to see the famed Mount Gwynne. Norman stayed behind but we were joined by two guides named Wolf and Gypsy. In contrast to many others, they showed no fear of catching our disease of over-indulgence in the VTA, and occasionally gave us a nudge if we were lagging. Probably their lack of fear of us was their belief that Irish Wolfhounds are immune to AIDS.

Around 6 pm we set off on the return journey, stopping in Wawa where Norman was spending the night. Paul, Steve and I shared the driving, stopping for supper on the way and breaking the journey to admire a brilliant display of Northern Lights. We reached the Sault at last at 1 am.

I think you'll agree that this nineteen-hour day required dedication with strength as well as addiction and insanity. The final diagnosis: three confirmed cases of AIDS and six more members requiring observation. However the three confirmed cases have had no harmful side effects yet, and thoroughly enjoyed the outing. ■

– Patrick Capper, *President, 1984-1986*

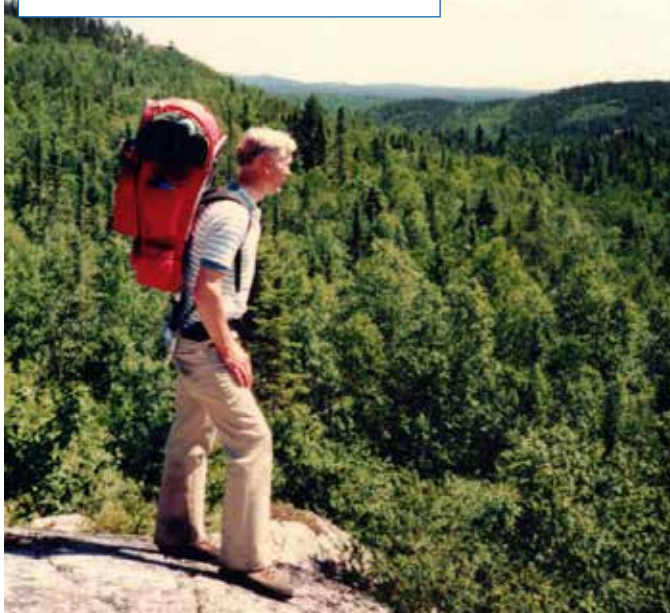




Deer Lake, Nor'wester Voyageur Trail

## VTA Past Presidents

- Dr. Paul Syme (1974-1984)
- Patrick Capper (1984-1986)
- Peter Stinnissen (1986-1990)
- Steve Taylor (1990-1994)



Patrick Kapper, 1987.



Left to right: Steve Taylor, John Burry and Roddie Larsen, 1989.



Left to right: Dr. Paul Syme, Norm Lediett, and Peter Stinnissen. Norm is holding the Hike Ontario Award he received in October of 1987.

# VTA

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Your articles and photos are welcome! Articles may be edited due to space constraints. Submissions deadline for our Fall 2023 Newsletter is September 30, 2023.

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Or email to: [info@voyageurtrail.ca](mailto:info@voyageurtrail.ca)

Articles in this newsletter may be copied if credit is given to the Voyageur Trail Association.

The Voyageur Trail Association is a non-profit, volunteer group dedicated to building and maintaining a public hiking trail along the northern shores of Lakes Superior and Huron, from Thunder Bay to Sudbury.

The VTA is a member of Hike Ontario and Trans Canada Trail.



## Trail Users' Code:

- Hike only along marked routes. Do not take short cuts.
- Do not climb fences.
- Carry out all garbage (if you carry it in, you can carry it out).
- Light cooking fires at official campsites only. Drench fires after use (or better still, carry a lightweight stove).
- Leave flowers and plants for others to enjoy.
- Do not damage live trees or strip off bark.
- Protect and do not disturb wildlife.
- Keep dogs under control (leash if necessary) and follow your club's guidelines concerning dogs.
- Respect the privacy of people living along the trail. Walk around the edges of fields, not across them.
- Leave only your thanks and take nothing but photographs.

### Be a low-impact hiker!

*The Voyageur Hiking Trail is a wilderness trail and some remote or little-used sections may be in poor condition due to fallen trees or regrowth of vegetation. All outdoor activities involve some degree of risk. Please, remember that your safety is your personal responsibility; be well prepared for your chosen activity and route. Use at your own risk.*



# VTA Photo Gallery

**Show us where you've been on the Voyageur Trail!**

Submit your favourite high-resolution photos with the trail location and photo credit name to [info@voyageurtrail.ca](mailto:info@voyageurtrail.ca).



*View from the Havilland Overlook Trail. Photo by Brian Wellwood.*



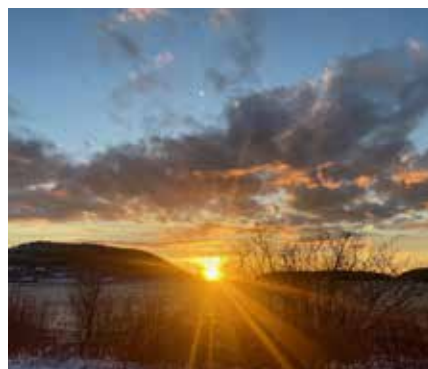
*Hiking on Lyda Bay Trail, Casque Isles section.*



*Worthington pictographs – Casque Isles section.*



*Dannys Cove, Terrace Bay Beach, Casque Isles section. Photo by Lisa Jacques.*



*Along the Coastal Trail, Group of Seven section.*



*Along the Kwewiskaning Trail, Group of Seven section.*



# That vast.

A photograph of a family hiking on a rocky trail. A woman in an orange sweater and grey vest, a man in a red and black plaid shirt, and a young child in a red jacket are walking along a rocky path. In the background, a large body of water stretches out, surrounded by forested mountains under a cloudy sky.

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