

VALHALLA MILE ADDED TO VALHALLA PROVINCIAL PARK

Thanks to a huge outpouring of public support and donations from across Canada and internationally, the Valhalla Mile property on the west side of Slocan Lake was successfully purchased and transferred to BC Parks in April of 2009. It is now part of Valhalla Provincial Park.

The Valhalla Foundation for Ecology and Social Justice, The Land Conservancy of BC (TLC) and BC Parks worked jointly to raise the \$1.5 million needed to secure the property from a private landowner.

Approximately 600 private donors, along with local conservation, naturalist and outdoor recreation organizations, dug generously into their pockets to contribute some \$240,000 during the 10-month campaign. BC Parks contributed \$700,000. Other important contributors were the Columbia Basin Trust (\$250,000), the BC Hydro Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program (\$150,000), the BC Trust for Public Lands (\$200,000), the Regional District of Central Kootenay (\$6,000), the Toronto-Dominion Friends of the Environment Foundation (\$10,000) and the Robert Schad Foundation (\$10,000). Burkhard Franz, the vendor, also made a significant contribution to the purchase under the Ecological Gifts Program of Environment Canada.

Renowned BC activist Colleen McCrory was involved in the early stages of securing the Valhalla Mile property when she passed away two years ago. The addition of the Valhalla Mile to her favourite park is a tribute to her memory and to her outstanding dedication to the conservation of the natural world. The Valhalla Foundation's campaign to secure the Valhalla Mile was co-ordinated in Colleen's memory by her brother and colleague, Wayne McCrory, and his wife and fellow conservation activist Lorna Visser.

"To protect the Valhalla Mile and have it added to the park was one of Colleen's dreams, so this acquisition gives us great joy," said Wayne McCrory. "We would particularly like to thank members of the public for the groundswell of support. Special thanks goes to people in the Slocan Valley, Vancouver and Victoria who gave generously, organized dinners and dances and silent auctions and many other fund-raising events and contributed lots of hard work to making this acquisition happen."

Valhalla Park was threatened some years back by a BC government policy encouraging the development of private, for-profit lodges in provincial parks. Many people who contributed to the purchase of the Valhalla Mile did so to ensure that it would be added to Valhalla Park and would never be developed. To this end, the Valhalla Foundation has ensured that a strongly worded conservation covenant was appended to the title when the land was transferred to BC Parks in April of 2009. As a result, the 155-acre (63-hectare) parcel of land can never be developed for a resort, a lodge, or private summer homes. It is now public land, open for all to enjoy respectfully, in perpetuity.

The 155-acre forested property includes 1.7 kilometres – slightly more than a mile – of natural, undeveloped shoreline, a rarity on southern BC lakes. The property is an important recreational and biological addition to Valhalla Park. In the spring, grizzly bears come down to the rocky bluffs nearby to feed on glacier lily corms. The property is a vital movement corridor for grizzly and black bears, wolverines, cougars, and mule deer, among the many species that frequent the land and its shoreline habitat. Other at-risk species such as Great Blue Heron and Townsend’s Big-eared bat are likely present, given the types of habitat. From a cultural perspective, ancient First Nations pictographs are located just north of the property and the shoreline was likely a Sinixt fishing and gathering site.

Twenty-five years ago, the B.C. government created Valhalla Provincial Park after eight years of citizen advocacy spearheaded by the Valhalla Wilderness Society. Stretching for some 25 km along the west shore of Slocan Lake, it was one of B.C.’s first large provincial parks that protected habitat from the valley bottom to the alpine mountaintops. To date the Valhalla Wilderness Society has achieved protection of approximately 1.25 million acres of parkland in B.C. during the past 30 years. The Valhalla Foundation for Ecology & Social Justice was later created as an instrument for securing private land for conservation, especially adjacent to parks. The successful securement of the Valhalla Mile is a major achievement in this regard. The Foundation wishes to thank chief fundraiser Lorna Visser, who ran an energetic campaign full of enthusiasm.

The Valhalla Foundation continues to help steward the Valhalla Mile property in that it is currently working with BC Parks and BC Forestry to ensure that a derelict building on it is safely removed and the site rehabilitated to its natural state.

There will be a ceremony on Wednesday July 1st to celebrate the successful campaign for the Valhalla Mile, at 2 p.m., at Dewis Memorial Park in Silverton, B.C. Everyone involved in any way in helping to make the Valhalla Mile campaign a success is invited to attend. There will be presentations by special guests and the singing of a locally composed “Valhalla Mile Anthem.” Following the brief ceremony, everyone is invited to enjoy a piece of delicious Canada Day cake.

There will also be a celebration dance the evening of July 1st featuring popular local musicians. Sponsored by private donors who contributed to the purchase of the Valhalla Mile, the dance begins at 8 p.m. at the Memorial Hall in Silverton, B.C., with an intermission for the Canada Day fireworks at 10 p.m. (see poster [__Scott, can you put in a link to the poster here? __](#)). Admission is \$12 at the door, with children 12 and under free.

[Please note that a private donor is covering all expenses for the July 1 celebration events]

For more information the other important work of the Valhalla Wilderness Society go to www.vws.org

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