



# **WCRA NEWS**

## **JANUARY - MARCH**

### **2022**

**OUR INAUGURAL NORTH POLE EXPRESS WAS A HUGE SUCCESS!**

**DAY OUT WITH THOMAS IS COMING BACK TO THE HERITAGE PARK: MAY 28/29 AND JUNE 4/5. SUMMER OPENING ON JULY 1.**



## **The WCRA MONTHLY MEETINGS**

The (in person) Monthly Meetings have been postponed until further notice due to the current pandemic.

### **ON THE COVER:**

The North Pole Express on it's way to the North Pole - photo by Christian Vazzaz. Image below was the new master image for the NPX campaign.



## **MEMBER NEWS**

The WCRA News is now a quarterly publication and will convert to a magazine in April 2022. Our funding application through the Community Gaming Program for 2021 was appealed and subsequently approved by the BC Lottery Corp. This funding mainly covers the cost of production and distribution of our newsletter.

NOTE: Due to decrease in newsletter issues, if you renewed prior to July 1, 2021, membership is valid to 31/12/21. Renewing after June 30 is now valid to 31/21/22

NOTE: the bi-monthly WCRA members meetings will be held via Zoom for the foreseeable future. Our last Zoom meeting held on Nov. 30th was another successful event with 30 members online. We once again had members from Vancouver Island, Squamish, Fraser Valley and even the US! The next Zoom meeting will be held on Tuesday, Jan. 25th.

Trivia Question: At the height of its popularity, how many stations did the E & N Railway have on its line from Victoria to Courtenay?

## **FROM THE EDITOR**

The Railway Museum of BC took a big gamble this Christmas by dropping the trademark name 'Polar Express' to save a large royalty payment on the gross revenue to the rights holder. We decided the timing was good in that there hadn't been many family oriented events this past couple of years due to covid. As restrictions reduced in the summer/early fall and based on the success of our Saturday openings, we decided that this was the opportunity to make the change. The result was a tremendous success. We didn't put tickets on sale until early October (as we watched the covid restrictions remain somewhat relaxed to some extent). We decided to take some of the savings on the previous royalty payments and invest in infrastructure improvements for the event and also hire entertainers for the train ride and the North Pole. See photos in following pages.

### **The Train Ride**

The train ride this year took the same route (down to the estuary and back) but this year we didn't rent the usual two Rocky Mountaineer coaches as in previous years due the November floods preventing them from being sent from Kamloops. So we substituted our BC-21 RDC with our five regular coaches and the Alberta. Although the consist was one less coach, we saved on the rather expensive transportation costs for the Rocky coaches here and return to Kamloops. The other major change was we set up two large tents outside the station as families would pick up their hot chocolate to take for the train which reduced the number of volunteers we used to have as 'chefs' in each coach. We also had 3-4 carolers entertain the families before they boarded the train. And a second tent between the station and the North Pole. En route, we had two elves come through the train handing out Candy Canes, we had an elf singing Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer and a mascot come through the train to entertain the children. We tried a different mascot each weekend and Frosty was the biggest hit with the kiddies. And on the return ride, we had pre-printed song books with four songs and karaoke instrumental music to accompany the singing.

### **The North Pole**

We hired gymnasts and dancers who set up to the left of the North Pole to entertain the families in the line up to see Santa and Mrs. Claus. We also extended the mini rail ride (that used to just go around the North Pole) to travel over double its previous length by running it around the back around the North Pole and out of the Roundhouse and into the Car Shop set up as a 'winter wonderland'. That was a huge hit. To make this biggest event of the year happen, we couldn't do it without our volunteers. Many volunteers spent days helping our staff set up the myriad of lights and displays in both the roundhouse and the car shop. And others volunteered all four weekends during the event itself.

Volunteers who assisted multiple days in setting up or volunteering during the North Pole or Mini Rail included: Barbara Stover, Jeanene, Aaron & Dale Gruber, Judy & Roy Crowston, Gordon Hall, Lee Bougie, Colleen & Colton McLellan, John Jellis, Dai Yates, Andy & Adam Gruber, Tom Arnott, Jenny, James & Helen Howarth, Bill McEnery, Dustin Blundell, Cristina Jacob, Donna Simon & Jeremy Davy, Morgan Payette, Deb Sankey, Bonnie Game, Judi Rhodes, Ryan & Gary Kreshuk, Singh Biln, Kyle Miller, Noah Wilson, Rob Misjak, Dinah Stephen, Karen Schreiber, Nora McDowall and 130 students from Howe Sound Secondary The Train Ride (those who volunteered multiple weeks): Rob Payette, Celine Quesnel, George Game, Tony Howarth, John Riley, Dai Yates & Craig McDowall.

## **A LOOK BACK: WCRA NEWS - JANUARY 2004**

Editor's Note: Usually I 'look back' 30-40 years but decided to do so 18 years ago.

### **Member News**

Member Henry Ewart had a successful launch of his new book 'Vancouver's Glory Years' which he co-authored with Heather Conn. A book launch reception was held at the Roundhouse Community Centre attended by many, including Vancouver Mayor Larry Campbell.

### **Annual Awards Dinner - Nov. 25th at the King's Inn on Kingsway**

Corporate Support Award: Mountain Retreat Hotel

Media Award: Art Jones & Co. (Shaw Cable 4)

Best Contribution to the Newsletter: Jim McPherson (very frequent contributor)

Volunteer Award: Joe Kerr (stepped in when Ken Mason passed away and did over 2000 volunteer hours in 2003!)

Member's Choice Award: Tomo'o Oshikawa (skilled jack of all trades at the park)

### **Christmas at Canada Place**

The trains this year have a new high profile sponsor as Starbucks has come on board. The Starbucks Express is being promoted in all their stores throughout the Lower Mainland.

### **5th Annual Christmas Lights at the Park**

The biggest Holiday Event at the park is our 'Christmas Lights'. More lights and newly crafted characters were set up all around the mini rail route. Both the station and the Brightbill House were decorated with hundreds of lights. And the Brightbill had a new collection of antique Christmas toys to give it an old fashioned Christmas look. The Beanery offered snacks and warm beverages. The station gift shop had new Christmas and Day Out with Thomas merchandise (from our first year last summer hosting DOWT).

And a new addition this year was 'Photos with Santa' held in the newly restored 1922 Lions Club 'Discovery Parlour Car'. This was only held on the first weekend of the event: Dec. 5-7th. Other dates our Holiday Special were held were: Dec. 12-14th, 19 - 23rd & 26th to 30th. Admission was \$4 per person or \$15 per family. All members received a 50% discount.

### **Snow hits the Heritage Park early!**

The park received 7 inches of snow on the morning of November 24th.

### **Collection**

#### **Locomotive #16**

WCRA's Baldwin steam locomotive #16 has cleared a major hurdle as restoration work plans get underway in Kamloops. The little 2-8-2 was given a hydro test to confirm the boiler integrity to further develop the plan for restoration by the Kamloops Heritage Railway steam shop crew. David Ames gave the hydro test at 240 lbs (130%) and he found some seepage around the mud ring. A slight leak around a single staybolt and also one tube. Then he reduced the pressure to 150 lbs to test the stay bolts and none were broken. This was a 'throttle hydro only' test as the superheater header has not been blocked out. This will be done before the final hydro test. The Kamloops crew were very happy to see that no stays were broken. They wanted to avoid changing them out as on CN #2141.

#### **Baggage Cart Restored**

Dave Emmington completed the restoration of the PGE baggage cart last fall. He took the bits and pieces, many badly deteriorated, home and completed the reconstruction. Thanks Dave for the hard work!



## Royal Hudson Preservation Fund

A direct mail campaign is currently underway and we have received some very nice donations including \$5000 from Dorthea Matewish. To date we have raised \$34,207.

PGE RS3 #561 on its way to the PGE from the Montreal Locomotive Works - shown at Brandon, MB on May 24th, 1951. #561 is part of the WCRA Collection. (DE)



Photo credit;  
Brian Schuff  
Collection -  
Winnipeg

## RAILWAY NEWS FROM 2004

### CN

The Vancouver Sun announced in mid November that the successful bidder to take over BC Rail operations was CN, and that CP Rail had pulled out of negotiations citing unfairness. OmniTrax /BNSF had not pulled out at that point, but now considered its bid a long shot. The speculation ended on Tuesday, Nov. 25th when the Premier announced that CN was the successful bidder and CN will pay the province \$1 billion (with a B!) cash and terms include CN to provide lower freight rates and faster service etc etc.

Highlights include continued public ownership which includes BC Rail's right of way, rail bed and tracks to remain the property of the government. CN has agreed to no line closures for at least five years - including maintaining the Tumbler Ridge line.

CN has the right to operate over BC Rail's line for 60 years. BC Rail's \$500 million debt is eliminated. CN will purchase 600 new freight cars for forest industry use and upgrade 1500 box cars. A new 'Chicago Express' service will be started from Prince George in 2004 reducing shipping time to the US gateway by 2 days. And a 30% reduction in travel time between Prince George and Vancouver to be achieved due to interchange elimination. CN has agreed to build a \$1 million 'state of the art' wheel shop in Prince George to facilitate locomotive and car repairs.

CN continues to field lots of interesting motive power in BC, some due to recent acquisitions or power run-throughs. In mid November, there were three UP locos, as well as nine Norfolk Southern units. There were some plans to use a couple of the UP units in the Sapperton to North Van transfer service but lack of RSC on the UP units killed that idea. Most of all of the US units are being used on the new Duluth, Missabe & Iron Range to Prince Rupert iron ore trains that have started to operate recently. There are four 92 car train sets with the ore exported to China from Prince Rupert. Other recent sightings in BC have been power from Illinois Central, Ontario Northland and Wisconsin Central.

### **CP Rail**

CP has named one of its passenger cars 'Ernest Smokey Smith', the Victoria Cross WW II hero. They unveiled the coach at a special ceremony with 100 guests on Nov. 29th at the West Coast Express platform at the Waterfront Station. Then a special ceremonial ride to Mission and return. Apparently the coach will be a display car and will feature the story of Smokey Smith, his Victoria Cross medal & a Seaforth Highlander display.

The CP Holiday Train will depart Ste. Therese, Quebec in early December and finish in Port Moody on Dec. 20th. Other BC stops, as it heads westward, will be Golden, Revelstoke, Sicamous, Salmon Arm, Chase, Kamloops, Ashcroft, Lytton, North Bend, Agassiz and on Dec. 20th Haney at 19:20 hours and finally Port Moody at 20:45 hours. The train will encourage both food and money donations for the local food banks at every stop on the route.

### **VIA**

VIA operated a VIA Rail 'Gourmet Train' between Toronto and Ottawa for three weekends in October. The rolling restaurant featured a five course dinner prepared by chefs from VIA and an Ottawa restaurant.

A & B Rail Services will now be servicing the RDC route on Vancouver Island. They have taken over from the Point Hope Shipyards, which has gone out of business. A & B does mainly contract track work in Western Canada.

### **White Pass & Yukon**

The WP&Y set new records last season and has some big plans for 2004. First, a one day record out of Skagway on June 11 last summer was set when the trains handled 4888 passengers. At season end, the WP & Y had carried 348,183 passengers! The entire diesel fleet was used due to the demand along with steam locomotive #73. Plans for 2004 include construction of eight new passenger cars and the start of rebuilding steam locomotive #69, a Baldwin built for the railroad back in 1907, This loco is the biggest narrow gauge steam engine ever built and was recently repurchased from a tourist operation in the US that had bought it back in 1955.

The North Pole Express rests till the next day.



The Alberta 'VIP Class' sold out for all 36 departures!



## The Entrance to Santa & Mrs. Claus's Cabin at the North Pole



**Gordon Hall's massive train layout with a total of 12 trains operating simultaneously !**

## CURRENT RAIL NEWS

### Rocky Mountaineer

On Jan. 5th, RM announced David McKenna as its new President & CEO. David previously served as President at the 'Banff/Jasper Collection by Pursuit', where he led expansion and acquisition projects in the Canadian Rockies. He also serves as the Board Chair of the Tourism Industry Association of Canada.

### CP

CP will be holding its third round of community engagement sessions around its expansion plans in Pitt Meadows. This virtual open house will run from Jan. 7th to Feb. 4th, 2022. This will give residents of the community an opportunity to submit their feedback on the updates to this project. The expansion project includes a Logistics Park which will have three major rail and transload components. These include an agricultural hub, an auto lot and a facility for transportation of fuels and ethanol. The project will cover 41 hectares of CP owned land. There is strong opposition to this project from the Pitt Meadows Municipality and close by residents.

### AMTRAK

CP & Amtrak announced an agreement in early January with Amtrak supporting a proposed merger of CP and Kansas City Southern. Amtrak stated "CP has been an excellent host of Amtrak intercity service year after year and welcome their commitment to our efforts to expand Amtrak services". CP has consistently received an A rating from Amtrak in its annual host railroad report card.

After over a 50 year hiatus, Amtrak and CP have moved a step closer to resuming passenger service through the 110 year old Detroit Rail Tunnel between Windsor and Detroit. This would set up a potential Chicago to Toronto passenger connection that Amtrak has been pursuing in recent years. CP owns the tunnel and this is only the first step and negotiations with VIA are one of the next steps together with the provincial government and the Ministry of Transport.

### CN

In related news to CP's expansion plans in Pitt Meadows, after long delays, CN will finally start to build a large intermodal facility terminal/Logistics Hub in Milton, ON. The facility was first proposed in 2015 but community resistance and environmental concerns delayed permitting. The facility will have three 12,000 foot tracks, two service tracks, offices and a mechanical facility.

CN experienced a derailment on Dec. 17th on their Edson sub near Swan Landing, approximately 15 miles west of Hinton AB which closed their mainline. Apparently 22 cars derailed including one tankcar but leakage was contained to the right of way. No injuries reported.

## Floods ravaged both Mainlines in the Fraser Canyon

On November 14th, an 'atmospheric river' hit the Lower Mainland, Fraser Valley and Fraser Canyon, In addition to all three highway routes being washed out, both CN and CP suffered major damage to their mainlines east of Vancouver.

CP Rail reported damage at 30 locations on their mainline between Vancouver and Kamloops with major damage in 20 of those locations. The most serious damage occurred at Tank Hill, northeast of Lytton, where the CP mainline crosses over the Trans Canada highway. The washout left only the track suspended above the highway which was also washed out. CP trains didn't get trains moving again until November 24th.

Washout at Tank Hill showing the suspended track.



Hundreds of motorists were stranded next to the CP mainline west of Hope and had to be choppered out leaving their cars behind. Many more were stranded in Hope and VIA ran an emergency train (which was available since it was isolated in Vancouver). It picked up over 200 motorists who boarded on CN's line just outside of Hope. The train then had to back up from Hope (MP 40) on the Yale Sub west to Matsqui (MP 88) as there was no wye in between those two locations.

CN suffered more severe damage including one derailment north of Yale, BC at 18:30 on November 16th when a CP unit (on a CN train and crew) and a two cars left the tracks.

No injuries were reported,



CP diverted some trains through Portland on the route east through the Columbia Gorge. CN ran a few up the former BC Rail line during the disruption also.

### **Southern Rail**

Southern Rail got hit with the flooding on the Sumas prairie and service between New Westminister and the connection with BNSF at the border was discontinued until the waters receded, The line between Huntingdon and Chilliwack reopened on December 29th. They sent a set of power late November / early December down the CN line from New Westminister so they could service some customers in the Chilliwack area. They were frequently running the valley crew out to Huntingdon from New West to deliver CN and BNSF interchange. (MR)



Photo credit:  
Ainsely Moore.

### **Othello Tunnels**

The November flooding also severely damaged the Othello Tunnels area in Coquihalla Canyon Provincial Park. The rail trail is expected to be closed for months to repair the damage.



Photo credit:  
Tyler Ingram

## Montana Rail Link

Montana Rail Link announced that it will end its long-term lease on BNSF Railway lines in its namesake state, Idaho, and Washington, with BNSF resuming operation of those routes. MRL President Derek Ollmann told employees in a memo on Jan. 10th.

No timeline for the changeover was indicated in the memo.

Montana Rail Link said in a press release that while it and BNSF have an agreement in place, the Surface Transportation Board must approve termination of the lease.

“There have been many changes in the rail industry since this long-term lease was signed, and given the need to be competitive in the current environment, we believe that this was the right time to revisit our longstanding agreement with BNSF,” Ollmann said. “This agreement protects our workers, our customers, and our long-term commitment to safety, and it will ensure a more seamless operation of rail services in Montana.”

Ollmann wrote in the memo that the decision “was made after a great deal of thought including securing BNSF’s commitment to continue employment for all MRL employees.” Employees will have the ability to remain in their current locations and BNSF will preserve payments that match MRL profit-sharing payouts, he wrote, once an agreement is negotiated.

The memo said an evolving freight environment has left 90% of Montana Rail Link’s freight volume on BNSF trains. Direct BNSF operation will eliminate the need to interchange freight between the two railroads. “BNSF operating the line as part of its network will ensure competitive access to global markets while continuing to provide the consistent and reliable service for our customers,” Ollmann wrote. (TM)



MRL's WB 'gas local' on the Flathead River, MT  
Photo credit:  
Tom Danneman

## Recent Donation Made to the Museum

The 960 crew thanks Al Cazes (a retired shop teacher) for a large donation of tools:

- 1 pipe/tubing cutter and 1 thread chaser
- 5 pipe dies (1/4 to 1 inch size) & one 18" Crescent wrench
- 3 RIGID pipe wrenches (18" to 24")
- 7 combination wrenches and one 3/4" PROTO ratchet, 12 sockets & flex bar
- 1 Craftsman tool box (BM)

Day Out with Thomas is coming back to the Railway Heritage Park! New activities in 2022. Always a very popular event and tickets will sell fast. Tickets and information are available with the link below



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**BACK COVER:** **Top Photo:** BCOL leading CN freight in the Thompson Canyon near Spences Bridge Jan.10th, 2022.  
Photo: Ken Storey

**Bottom Photo:** Western Maryland Scenic Railroad No. 1309, formerly Chesapeake and Ohio Railway No. 1309, is a compound articulated class "H-6" "Mallet" type steam locomotive with a 2-6-6-2 wheel arrangement. WMSR just completed a six year rebuild program and was the power for their Polar Express event this December, setting new attendance records. Photo: Trains Magazine

**TRIVIA ANSWER:** E & N Railway at the height of its operation had 45 stations between Courtenay and Victoria. And an additional 8 stations between Qualicum and Port Alberni!



**CANADIAN COUNCIL  
FOR  
RAILWAY HERITAGE**

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