

The Railway Museum of BC Newsletter

April - June 2026

Buddy Rolled into the Museum Again in May!



Norman Foote
Singer, songwriter, comedian



The Myrtle Sisters
On Stage and Street

**BUDDY &
FRIENDS**
CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL



**BUDDY &
FRIENDS**
CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL



RAILWAY MUSEUM
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

**Volume 66
Issue # 2**

FROM THE EDITOR

My apologies for the tardiness in getting this issue out. I have a little home-based video editing business, and one of my projects is transferring old 8mm movie film folks shot back in the 60's to 80's. This job entailed 22 400 ft rolls of Super 8 film and 23 VHS-C and VHS tapes to convert to digital with a tight time frame. That took an enormous amount of time, so thanks for your patience.

The second quarter of 2026 was quite quiet at the park. Our major event 'Buddy and Friends' achieved mixed success, and our thinking is that it will not re-appear next year in its current format. Bob Philip's and Gordon Bell's reports in this issue will give you further details of what transpired during these three months.

Updates from WCRA

Reports from our major department heads from April to June

Bob Philip – President

As you know, we are in the process of forming partnerships with CRWS and Rocky Mountaineer. I was confident that the final agreements would be in place by now, but a couple of issues with BCRP and CRWS wanting to expand their space and get a longer-term agreement have slowed things down. The good news is, CRWS has paid in full for the first of a three-year agreement and working out a longer than three year deal is what we ultimately want as well. Our goal in all of this is to have long-term access to the space we need in MP2 at no cost, or at least at a manageable cost, and to have our bank mortgage paid down. The longer-term agreement with BCRP and the Province is key to CRWS and RM investing the financial resources needed to help us get where we need to be. BCRP has agreed to the sub lease of MP2 to CRWS with a couple of caveats that are manageable in the short term. CRWS and RM want a clause which allows for the possible purchase of MP2 and other facilities going forward, or at least a multi-year lease.

WCRA is currently central to all of this. We will need to determine our minimal needs at MP2 before we agree to anything long term and we should do this sooner rather than later. We do have a working restoration group and our own rail staff who are best to make that determination.

Some board members have been involved in the discussions with CRWS and BCRP and we may call on you again soon. It would be good to establish a working committee so we can get support in any dealings we will have with the Province and BCRP going ahead. Dylan is currently the board rep for the CN track north of Squamish and since both CRWS and RM have expressed interest in helping to keep the rail line open, this position is important.

General Manager's Report - Gord Bell

CN Roundhouse & Conference Centre

The CN Roundhouse was host to the spring Bespoke Market, Surerus Murphy and the Children's Festival in the last quarter. I am currently working on a new business plan for the Conference Centre that will focus on increasing usage and exposure in 2027 and beyond.

Blacksheep Event Rentals

We are now well into the 2026 event season with Blacksheep. The industry throughout the Sea to Sky region and Metro Vancouver has seen a significant downturn this year, after years of continued growth coming out of Covid. At Blacksheep, we have taken on several new operational strategies to reduce expenses while delivering a higher quality product. We have undergone noteworthy labour cuts and transformed our sales department and our way of selling. The results have been successful so far. Naturally, at this time of year coming out of winter with the event season only starting on May 1, we always show a deficit. However, this year the bottom line is up 80.8% YTD over 2025.

Film Production

Year to date in 2026, film revenue at the museum has surpassed 2025 film revenue. Special thanks to Patrick Doiron and his great team at IWL for the continued support of the museum.

North Pole Express

Although we are in the middle of summer, planning has already begun on the 2026 production of the North Pole Express. If you are interested in helping in any aspect of the production, please contact Chrissy at chrissy@wcra.org for more information on how you can help. If you have any extra Christmas lighting or décor that you would like to donate to the production, please contact gord@blacksheeprentals.ca. We will be happy to provide a tax receipt for your donation.

Museum Operations Report - Singh Biln

We continue to manage museum operations effectively with less staff, as part-time staffers Chrissy Stephen, Karen Schreiber and Singh Biln are filling the void without adding payroll costs. Volunteers Gill & Tom Arnott, Eric Green, Greg Robertshaw, Richard Courage, Gordon Hall and Gary Shortt have also taken on additional duties such as mini-rail maintenance & operation, model train layouts, archives organization, and guest services.

The six iconic Woodward's Christmas window displays from their downtown store during the 1970's to 1990's were purchased by Canada Place and used for their Christmas event for the past 30 years. Canada Place will no longer use these and has offered them to us for free. We have decided to take three of them that will best fit our NPX event. Canada Place will deliver these to Squamish in early October at their cost.



In addition, Woodward's Santa Sleigh & Reindeer are being donated to us by a private collector for a tax receipt. Singh is arranging to pick these up from Mission over the next couple of weeks.

Rail Services Report - Kirby Read

MP2 Lease

We have leased a portion of MP2 shop to Canadian Railway Services for a multi-year project to convert Rocky Mountaineer coaches into single level dome cars. The first two coaches arrived on March 14 and work started immediately. We expect to finalize details of the agreement by the end of June.

Motive Power

Budd Car BC-21 was fully prepared and ran flawlessly during the Train Show, during Buddy and on operating days since. Earlier this month Kirby replaced an engine water pump, pulley & belt and flushed the cooling system, which improved its reliability.

Unit FP9A CN #6520 continues operating for switching duties but needs a wheel turn and air brake valves rebuilt. Kirby is arranging the wheel turn at VIA but may be deferred until later in summer as the unit is required for a film shoot in July.

Rail Car Storage

In early April, T-Rail Products Inc. owner Lisa Tuningley called Craig McDowall wondering if we could assist her with storage. Craig had her get in touch with Kirby for storage of 14 railcars over the next few weeks, as they were being evicted from CN tracks and had been paying excessive fees. BCRP would not allow use of Track #7, so Kirby switched the cars into various tracks on both sides of Government Road and cleared crossings to accommodate T Rail at a lower daily rate than CN.

Shuttles

Kirby & crew got both shuttles running and moving in March. The Rail Services team, plus Greg's CP8000 volunteers, are now proceeding with additional repairs including lights, bells & horns, replacing broken windows, removing toilets, and installing additional seats. Singh is following up with regulators for certification to operate.

Mini Rail

Locomotives SRY #124 and BCR #4601 continue operating, while BCR #646 is being readied for service. Its riding car is being painted by Greg's CP8000 volunteers. Volunteer Eric Green has set up a mini-rail equipment repair area in the Carshop, moved all mini-rail parts, tools and out-of-service riding cars from MP2, and set up shelving and a work bench with a hydraulic lift. Eric has been doing great work repairing riding cars in the new shop.

Marketing Report - Cathy Thompson

A much needed and overdue New Membership Program Structure (approved by BoD in March) has confirmed capability of Fare Harbour to partially automate management of our Membership program. This will require tech set-up and testing by Fare Harbor of the new functionality we have not used before.

Other Activities done in Quarter 2

- Advertisement in BC Guide for Arts & Culture (published in May)
- 2026 Tourism Challenge brochure and website content
- March Model Train Show – organic social media posts and email
- July Car Show - started organic social media posts

Collections Report - Greg Robertshaw

Restoration of CP 8000 continues. The cab and steam room will be painted within two weeks, and the new engineer's sunshade assembly has just been welded in place. The next major step is the steam cleaning and painting of the engine room and trucks.

The CP 8000 team is also busy repairing the electrical systems on the Kaoham Shuttle.

The pre-painting prep work is almost finished on the Englewood Railway (Woss) Steam Hammer and final painting should commence soon. The artifact is planned to be moved to the Car Shop for display.

The Collection Committee is actively pursuing the designation of the Car Shop as a National Historic Site.

We finally received the official reasons why our application for a Skytrain car was denied:

(a) We asked TransLink to pay for transportation to Squamish and their estimated cost of \$25,000 was not acceptable to them.

(b) They realized the historical significance of our chosen car (014) and decided to keep it for their own historical interpretive display.

While this news is disappointing, there is some comfort in knowing the most historical car will be preserved in a museum-like setting.

#374 Yaletown Rail Pavilion: George Game

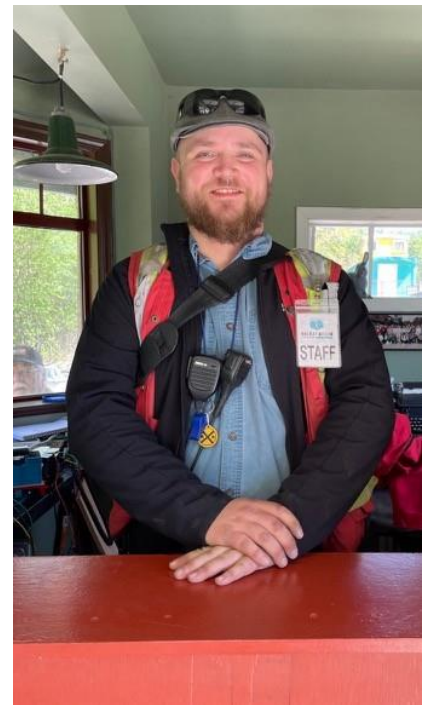
We celebrated the 139th Anniversary of #374 arriving in Vancouver on May 17th. We had 2464 Visitors that day. The Little Mountain Brass Band played 2 45-minute sets that included the Engines Whistle and Bell. Speeches were given by Terry Young, MLA for Yaletown and myself. We had Children's Craft Tables from the Roundhouse and the Steveston Tram. Terry Yung also had a table with handouts for the kids and adults. The roundhouse supplied the Band, a Popcorn Machine and the PA system. Starbucks supplied the coffee. I purchased 6 large Costco Cakes and arranged for an electrician to hook up the 374's boiler. It was a perfect weather day, and everyone had a good time. You all should have been there!

2026 Buddy Festival

Some photos of our outstanding staff & volunteers who made 'Buddy' possible!



The 'Buddy' RDC-21 Train Crew



Bart Millard



'Buddy'



Our 'Gift Shop' gang:
Nora McDowall, Lynn Edgerwood, Sarah Jane
Kennerley and Barb Stover



Gary & Ryan Kreschuk



Gordon Hall



Kyle Miller & the 'Toy Train Gang'



Missy Rasmussen



The Myrtle Sisters



Kate Gentil, Dinah Stephen
& Hailey Wilson



Bob Philip, Karen and Singh Biln

CURRENT RAIL NEWS

VIA

On June 29th, The Honourable Steven MacKinnon, Minister of Transport, joined by Mathieu Paquette, Interim President and Chief Executive Officer of VIA Rail Canada, announced a \$1.95 billion Government of Canada investment to renew VIA Rail's long-distance, regional and remote locomotive fleet while bringing passenger locomotive assembly back to Canada for the first time in decades.

The investment includes: \$1.6 billion for the production of 45 new locomotives by Stadler, a leading Swiss rail manufacturer with a global 'centre of competence' facility for mainline locomotives in Spain. Leveraging its global supply chain and Canadian suppliers, Stadler will complete the final assembly of up to 36 locomotives in Canada, marking the first time in decades that passenger locomotives for VIA Rail will be assembled domestically.

He announced \$357 million for VIA Rail to build a new assembly and maintenance facility in Montréal, Quebec, where the Canadian assembly of the locomotives will take place. Built by Pomerleau, the facility will also support the maintenance and operation of the new fleet at VIA Rail's Montréal Maintenance Centre over the long term. (VIA)

CN

On July 15th, CN Rail employees in northern Ontario were evacuated as a viral social media video showed a wildfire surrounding a train.

The video, which was taken inside the train, shows raging flames around it with trees burning next to the rail line on both sides of the track. A crew member can be seen also capturing the incident on their cellphone.

The train was stopped in Armstrong, Ont., which is north of Thunder Bay. A CN Rail spokesperson told Global News all employees in the area were evacuated overnight Monday.

"CN has temporarily suspended rail operations near Armstrong, ON as a precaution due to wildfire activity in the area. As a safety measure, CN employees in the area and residents of the Town of Armstrong were evacuated overnight," the spokesperson said in an email.

Federal authorities are looking into whether Canadian National Railway Co. broke the law after this crew had to be evacuated from the train engulfed in flames in northwestern Ontario.

The government is “conducting follow-up oversight” to determine if CN failed to comply with rules under the Railway Safety Act, said Transport Canada spokesperson Hicham Ayoun.

“Transport Canada will not hesitate to implement operational restrictions or protective measures, when necessary,” he said in an email Friday.

The department is also working with Employment and Social Development Canada to determine whether health and safety violations occurred, he said. (TRNS)

CPKC

CPKC has been recognized by Amtrak as its top performing host railroad, the 10th straight year the railroad or predecessor Canadian Pacific has been so honored. Tamara Noel, Amtrak assistant vice president, host railroads, presented CPKC with a plaque commemorating the achievement in a visit to the railroad’s U.S. Operational Center.

“We appreciate what you do to keep Amtrak trains on time,” Noel said in a press release. “Your commitment and attention to detail are a part of our success.” CPKC hosts portions of five Amtrak routes: the *Empire Builder* and *Borealis*, between Minneapolis and Chicago; the *Hiawatha*, between Milwaukee and Chicago; the *Ethan Allen Express*, between New York City and Burlington, Vt.; and the *Adirondack*, between New York City and Montreal. (CPKC)

AMTRAK

Amtrak is asking for at least seven different car types in its order for new single-level passenger cars, according to its Request for Proposals prepared for prospective builders.

The request calls for consists with an “accessible core” to feature 32-inch-wide aisles allowing people with disabilities to reach all amenities, such as the dining car, but not all coaches or sleeping cars will be fully accessible. Also included with the RFP: a “CX Vision” document with extensive illustrations of what the company seeks in terms of seating and car configurations.

The first Siemens Airo trainset has been accepted by Amtrak, and the company is wasting no time in getting it to its new home in the Pacific Northwest in early July.

The trainset is one of eight for Amtrak Cascades service between Eugene, Ore., and Vancouver, British Columbia. Three of the trainsets will be delivered in late June. Upon arrival in Seattle, the first set will begin final testing. No date has yet been announced for the beginning of revenue service. (AMTRK)

'A Look Back' from our Archives

WCRA News - June 2001

ASSOCIATION NEWS - from the May General Meeting

A total of 51 members and guests were present; the meeting was chaired by Dave Killeen:

- Bill Johnston reported on our financial situation, noting that we continue to make progress on debt reduction as planned for the year and are keeping our heads above water as we now start into our productive spring and summer season with the Heritage Park and Tours.

- Susan Steen thanked Bill Watson for assistance with the 40th anniversary mailings and noted to members the new 40th anniversary club in which they would all be able to participate.

- Dave Killeen apologized for the late delivery of the May newsletter, due to the Post Office four day Easter shutdown. Dave outlined the process of renomination for the two WCRA Director positions not yet filled - they are for our Association Operations and Tours. Nominations will be held at the May General Meeting as per notice given.

- Bill Marchant reported on the first meeting of the new Collections Committee, held April 23 at Ron Anstey's home. Plans for 2001 work were reviewed.

- Glen Wideman reported that Heritage Park attendance continues strong for the first four months of 2001, although changes to the Hudson Steam Train schedule will impact attendance in May. The recent Scavenger Hunt was a great success.

- Glen reported that efforts to reposition the exhibit cars to the station track had been unsuccessful due to lack of available track and our spur clogged outside the gate by BC Rail. Another attempt will be made in coordination with BC Rail at a future date.

- WCRA's 40th anniversary celebration plans were reviewed, and all members were invited to participate.

New Board of Directors

The WCRA's new Board of Directors is shaping up and will be ready to assume governance of the association by the end of May as planned. As we go to press, eleven of the fifteen positions have been filled, with work underway to complete the remaining four. At the May general meeting in Burnaby, we hope to be able to announce all but the remaining two WCRA directors for which nomination will be held at that time.

The new board is planning an orientation meeting in June and will then get to work. Meantime, the WCRA elected directors are progressively assuming their new roles with the assistance of the outgoing executive on a transitional basis.

'Caribou Prospector visits our Park

Well, sort of. It was a combination of bad circumstances: an accident on BC Rail that damaged BC 31 on April 13. And as a result, the Cariboo Prospector's passengers were being bused north the next day to Darcy where they would board the Budd car

The next problem: the tragic accident on Highway 99 April 14 just south of Whistler that killed three and closed the highway for five hours.

So, here is the bus northbound with BC Rail host David Taylor, and the news of the highway closure. So what to do? Well, the bus pulled into the West Coast Railway Heritage Park and BC Rail's passengers had a place to enjoy, explore and have coffee until they were able to proceed north after the highway reopened.

Guest Visits Continue Strong

Guest visits to the Heritage Park continued strong through April, with a total of 4,567 visitors by the end of the month. That continues a strong trend of growth for our second winter of operation, with each month better than last year. Keeping this trend may be a challenge, however, as there will be no Hudson Steam tram in May this year. Last year was a busy month with their school program.

Promotional Events

The West Coast Railway Heritage Park has been active with several promotional events to keep our profile growing ever stronger. Our display won an Honourable Mention in the recent Pemberton Trade Fair (April 28). and we are ready to participate in the Squamish Trade Fair on May 26 & 27. We will be using the display which has been at Tourism Vancouver since December for the next show.

Mothers Day/Fathers Day

By the time you receive this issue. Mother's Day at the Heritage Park will have passed and the new rooms at the Brightbill Heritage House will be open. This is an exciting development and adds another new dimension to the Park for 2001. Make sure you visit soon to see the latest creation by Donna Fourchalk in her ongoing restoration of this lovely house.

Committee Structure for the Heritage Park is being Developed

The development of volunteer committees for the Heritage Park is a major priority for the ongoing growth and operations of our great heritage railway attraction. While the committees will help as we assemble lists of volunteers and start to increase our volunteer management

'Look Back' (cont'd)

We need your help now in some critical areas. Here are some of the areas where volunteer assistance is both fun and rewarding:

Mini Rail: Not a new committee, but one that plays a vital role. We operate every day and now that summer is approaching, the weather is good and the trains getting longer. We need conductors and engineers, please book on by calling 604-898-9336. If you would like to learn to operate, please get your name on the list and we will arrange the proper training. This is one of our most popular attractions and it's great fun taking trainloads of guests around the perimeter of the Heritage Park.

Workshop: We need to get active in the development of the shop facility in the Carshop building. Specifically, we are looking for a Shop Superintendent, a volunteer with machine and wood shop tool knowledge to help with its design and set up. We need to work with Capilano College in the near future to design the workspace and to prepare the shop for their use in the fall as well as for our everyday use. If you can help, call Don Evans at 604-988-3435 or Sherry at 604-898-9336.

Park Hosts: There are a whole host of fun locations which we would like to have the help of volunteers this summer season. We would like people to staff various key exhibits such as the Brightbill Heritage House, the British Columbia business car and to act as greeters as guests arrive on the site. These are relaxing and fun roles, with warm and dry conditions and easy to do.

Collections Committee:

The WCRA Collections Committee for 2001 got started with a kick off meeting held April 23rd. Preservation Director Ron Anstey hosted six members to get off and running with plans for the year. Items discussed included the restoration and maintenance priorities for the summer and the moves at the Heritage Park to accommodate both guests and the collection. Action plans were established for the short term, with the focus on the equipment moves as well as the completion of the current major projects: the Colonist Car and the RPO.

Maintenance priorities for the summer include the replacement of the roof on the Marjatta coach display car and the repainting of the Cowichan River as first priorities. There are also a number of small maintenance projects like leaking windows, roof vents etc., that volunteers can help with at any time as the weather gets better.

The next meeting of the committee is set for Saturday, June 2nd, at 10:00 hours at the Heritage Park, where the goal will be to review the condition of the collection with an on-site inspection. All members are invited to attend.

Look Back (cont'd)

We welcome Sue Haralds-Towsley to our staff, joining our Executive Director Susan Steen at the office. Sue will be a part-time Administrative Assistant in the office, working 2 1/2 days a week for now. Her extensive experience with non-profit organizations will be of great help in our administrative operations. Welcome aboard Sue!

Squamish Grant in Aid Update

A Grant in Aid was recommended by the Committee of the Whole of Squamish Council on April 24, 2001 in the amount of \$11,140 to rebate the municipal fees paid by the West Coast Railway Heritage Park to the District relative to the new station building. This aid is very much appreciated and has been added to the campaign totals as a pledge, as budget approval is still necessary. Thanks to the District of Squamish for their support in our community project.

Railway News

BC Rail

Friday, April 13th - Good Friday for all of us as a holiday, but not so good for BC Rail's Budd cars as the southbound 'Cariboo Prospector' hit a rockslide at Birken on its regular run to North Vancouver. RDC-3 BC 31 was damaged and word has it, may not be repaired. This could mean another casualty to the already too thin fleet.

More changes for BC Rail's passenger services this summer, as cost reduction efforts continue to be made. As a result, the plans for the Hudson Steam train, the Pacific Starlight Dinner Tram and the Explorer have all changed again for 2001. Here's where things stand as we go to press this time:

- *Hudson Steam Train* service will now start Saturday, June 2 and Sunday, June 3 and then the train will operate five days a week (Wednesday through Sunday as usual) until September 2nd. The train will then operate weekends only. September 7, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, & 21, 22, 23. Motive power will be 2-8-0 # 3716 with our FP7A #4069 available as back up. Two May trips will operate for private groups on May 18 and May 26.

- *Pacific Starlight Dinner Train* service will start May 11th, but the train will only operate four days a week—Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.

- * *The 'Explorer'*, the Whistler based tour train will see major changes as it is integrated into the 'Cariboo Prospector' schedule out of North Vancouver instead of Squamish. This provides extra capacity on the equipment-strapped Prospector as far as Whistler.

This provides extra capacity on the equipment-strapped Prospector as far as Whistler. The Explorer will leave Whistler at 09:45 and travel with the Prospector to Lillooet, then continue to Pavilion—its new terminus—at 13:40. It will start back from Pavilion at 1400, arriving back at Whistler at 17:40. If you want to do this one, do it northbound. As there is no wye at Pavilion it will be a backwards ride in the southbound direction!

The changes have thrown a myriad of things into chaotic conditions, as tour operators scramble after printing their materials and itineraries for their customers and then, all of a sudden, the train plans are changed. Hopefully, things will get up and running and on track for a good 2001 season.

Motive Power Notes

Two more leased units have been sent home: HLCX #3876 and #3878 were interchanged out to CN in late March for return to Helm Leasing. (FNW), Northwind's motive power. B39-8F #1700 has been a regular as a middle unit in a three unit set in Squamish— North Vancouver transfer service through March and April.

'Cariboo Prospector' kicks off 2001 Season

The first run of the *Cariboo Steam Spectacular* kicked off the steam season on BC Rail for 2001, departing North Vancouver just after 08:00 on April 25th. Consist was 2-8-0 #3716, power car Shalah, diner Alta Lake, table car Birken, and coaches Dragon and Whistler. The train looked great on a fresh sunny morning as it made its way along Howe Sound and stopped for a visit at the West Coast Railway Heritage Park before continuing north. Arrival back was on Saturday, April 28th.

Whistler Northwind Debuts

The Whistler Northwind tour train departed on its first northbound run on Sunday, May 6th. The North Vancouver station sports new canopies and other changes as it has been upgraded

Amtrak

Amtrak's F40PH -2 #415 has been painted into the Amtrak 'California' scheme: silver with a sweeping blue band and side as on the F59PHI's in California service. This unit, which was formerly a GO Transit unit, has ventured into Seattle on the Coast Starlight. Amtrak "cabbage" car 90220 (former F40 #220) has been regularly coming to Vancouver on the point of Amtrak Cascades #760 / 763, still regularly using silver and blue Talgo trainset. This cab control / baggage unit is apparently destined for the new Boston, MA to Portland train service when it starts up.

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AMTRK (Amtrak)

Note: WCRA volunteers: Do not forget to send your volunteer hours for 2026 and send to donna@wcra.org.

Deadline is February 28th, 2027.

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**New Amtrak Cascades consist on its test run to Vancouver
July 30, 2026. Photo by: Ken Storey**



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