

BMN HIKE REPORT

Burnaby Mountain Circuit (August 10, 2019)

By Chris and Evelyn Thompson

An energetic group of seven BMN hikers, we meet to begin our northern circuit of Burnaby Mountain on a cool and overcast day. We start our route on North Road Trail. The trailhead is located off North Road and Chapman Avenue, close to the Burnaby/Coquitlam border.

North Road is Metro Vancouver's oldest road (1859). It was constructed under R.C. Moody's Royal Engineers, connecting our then capital city of New Westminster to Burrard Inlet.

**North Road circa 1880.
*BC Archives #A-04595.***

A primary concern at the time was maintaining access to the ocean should the Fraser River become icebound in the winter. In the 1880s the road was used more as a route for travellers to the ferry at "Aliceville," at the north end of the road on Burrard Inlet, with a railway, hotels and several summer cottages. The Aliceville ferry would then take passengers to the city of Port Moody. A cairn marks this heritage site at the start of the "Dead Moped" trail, the second trail in our circuit.

Dead Moped is a trail that is used by a mix of people including bikers, joggers, hikers and dog walkers. The bikers, with their usual dedication and hard work, have created a true "tree therapy"-type trail with many boardwalks over the rainy season gooey bits and biker-style bridges and apexes. The wooden creations can be easily walked around or over if you're bold enough.

Getting to the end of Dead Moped, we meet up with part of the Trans Canada Trail. A long descent is required and eventually we arrive at the next trail, "Cougar Creek," directly opposite Suncor oil storage site.

We continue along Cougar Creek Trail, which parallels the Barnet Highway, and we meet up with Barnet Trail, which is more of a service road than a trail. Soon, we come upon "Hang Your Hat" trail. This trail derives its name from a hat-rack found nailed to a tree while the trail was being developed. Hang Your Hat



is a nice diversion from Barnet Trail and can be taken as an alternative as it meets up with Barnet Trail further on. Barnet Trail terminates at Barnet Highway next to the Mountain Air Bike Park. The park was developed after the Barnet Rifle Range closed when its lease was not renewed by the landowner.

A little background history: In September 1996, the Province, City of Burnaby and Simon Fraser University transferred 313 hectares of land below the university campus to the City of Burnaby to create protected natural areas and public open space known as the Burnaby Mountain Conservation Area. It should be noted that the voters of Burnaby helped pass this initiative by referendum vote.

From a naturalist's perspective, Burnaby Mountain is found in the Coastal Western Hemlock Biogeoclimatic Zone and Dry Maritime Subzone. While this zone is typically composed of forests dominated by western hemlock and other coniferous species, logging at the turn of the century and again in the 1940s altered the structure and composition of the forest. Whereas the original forest was composed of large western red cedar, western hemlock and Douglas-fir trees, today the forest is dominated by deciduous species in their early successional stage. These include red alder, big leaf maple, western dogwood, vine maple and paper birch.

Watercourses, such as Stoney Creek, Eagle Creek and Silver Creek on the south slope of Burnaby Mountain support fish populations. In particular, Stoney Creek is recognized as providing important salmon habitat.

On the north side of Burnaby Mountain, where our hike is situated, the drainage systems flow directly to Burrard Inlet and are not so viable to support fish populations. This is due in fact to steep slopes and lower water flows and also some human made impediments. One creek, however, Simon Creek, contains relatively good habitat and may benefit from future enhancement efforts.

According to the 1999 Management Plan for Burnaby Mountain, conservation data reveal several species of Provincially Blue- and Red-listed wildlife including:

- the great blue heron, green heron, turkey vulture and Hutton's vireo;
- the Pacific giant salamander and the spotted frog;
- and the mammals: Pacific water shrew, Trowbridge's shrew, Townsend's mole, Keen's long-eared myotis and Townsend's big-eared bat.

Continuing our hike along the Mountain Air Trail, we encounter interpretive signs referring to the species of trees predominant along this trail. One must look south during this point of the hike and imagine the town of Barnet which was built up around the second largest lumber mill in British Columbia at the time and the largest on the Pacific Coast (1912). At full capacity this mill produced a half million board feet of lumber per eight hour shift. The Barnet Lumber Company was a model mill comprised of nice homes, stores, post office, tennis courts and a dance hall. Men ate for 40 cents at the massive dining hall, which served 150 men. A choice of soup, two meats, two fish, two vegetables, pie, pudding, tea and coffee were served.

Our hike on Mountain Air Trail soon intersects with the Velodrome Trail where we take the left fork and start our slow climb on the hard-packed trail until we arrive at the 500 Stairs. Velodrome Trail is named for the indoor bicycle track which can be partially seen at this point as a large white oval structure to the right, downslope through the trees. The velodrome's official name is the Harry Jerome Sports Centre.

After a drink of water it's time to tackle the many steps that will lead us up Burnaby Mountain. Several little switch-backs afford us some nice views of Deep Cove, Belcarra and Indian Arm. At the top of the stairs, we follow a well-travelled, hard-packed trail along chain-linked safety fencing. Soon, the trail terminates at open fields and an interesting sight ahead.

Are these totem poles on Burnaby Mountain? Well, yes and no. This is the Playground of the Gods. Playground of the Gods was envisioned and realized by Toko Nuburi, an Ainu woodcarver from Kushiro on the Island Hokkaido, Japan. Kushiro is Burnaby's sister city. Work began in 1989 by Toko and his son Shusei. POTG draws on animist traditions with animal totems representing the gods descending to create the world, while the smaller surrounding poles represent the Ainu people's intertwined relationship.

After a quick washroom break, we walk through the Centennial Rose Garden, which features over 900 thorn-decked bushes laden with glorious, wonderfully fragrant flowers. After our quick excursion through the garden and a small climb towards Simon Fraser University, we come upon an interesting open art mural painted over a typically boring concrete water storage tank. A few of us enjoy walking around the tank and viewing the wonderful undersea creatures on vibrant display with an outdoor aquarium theme.

Our intrepid hikers, needing a refuel and perhaps a little caffeine, head into Simon Fraser University Village, or "UniverCity" as the developers have coined the area, where condo towers and services abound. Making a shortcut through the university itself, we are still slightly enthralled by the type of architecture used in designing and building the university. The architects were Erickson & Massey. It was built along with the University of Victoria in the early 1960s to meet the baby boom and projected number of 7000 students, with the ability to expand to 18,000. Tall buildings would have been out of scale with the massive mountaintop ridge, so a series of terraced horizontal structures were designed that hugged the ridge and dissolved into the landscape. The central academic quadrangle was conceived in the tradition of Oxford and Cambridge. The university opened in 1965.



**A much-needed coffee break on Burnaby Mountain.
*Evelyn Thomson photo.***

We find our caffeine and, after "chillin" a bit, follow the Trans Canada Trail down the mountain back to our starting point. We are four hours on the circuit, cover 15 km, and gain about 400 m in elevation. A very satisfying outing.