



# Museum Muse

AUGUST 2011

We are not the makers of history. We are made by history.

~Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

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## Shawnigan Lake's Claim to Fame

By: Devon McLean, Museum Assistant

As the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the driving of the Last Spike on the E&N Railway approaches, we at the Shawnigan Lake Historical Society will have a display in honor of the symbolic day. In the past, anniversaries of the Last Spike have been celebrated at Cliffside in Shawnigan. Unfortunately, the train will not be running this summer. However, it is still important that we as a community do not lose sight of the historical significance of the Last Spike.

In 1886 the completion of the E&N Railway, running from Esquimalt to Nanaimo, marked an important turning point in the history of Vancouver Island. The new line would connect many communities that had only been accessible by dirt roads and trails. The Canadian government agreed to finance the construction of the E&N in order to pacify disgruntled British Columbians, who were frustrated by the delays in receiving the railway they had been promised at the time of Confederation. Because Ottawa had not satisfied these terms by the original deadline, British Columbia came very close to seceding from the Dominion of Canada. If not for the hasty completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway and the construction of the Island's E&N railway, the history of our province may have been very different indeed.



The E&N was most certainly of great importance, not only for Vancouver Island, but also for the province and for Canada as a whole. This is why our first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, made his one and only trip to British Columbia to attend the ceremony marking the completion of the line.

On August 13, 1886, at 8:25 AM, Sir John A. Macdonald and his second wife, Lady Agnes Macdonald, made their way from Esquimalt up the island aboard a private E&N passenger car named "Maude". Robert Dunsmuir, the prominent businessman contracted by the government to oversee the construction of the railway, and several others, accompanied them. Arriving at Mile 25 in Shawnigan Lake, just short of an hour after departing, the Prime Minister and company disembarked from the train at Cliffside Station. Using a silver hammer, Sir John A. ceremoniously "drove the [golden] spike home with a few well delivered blows," as it was reported by the Daily Colonist at the time. He then gave a short speech, which was followed by hearty cheers from the crowd of one hundred (Continued on pg. 3)

## New Presentations in the Museum Theatre



The Shawnigan Lake Museum is proud to present two new PowerPoint presentations in the museum's theatre. *The Last Spike* by Devon McLean, Museum Assistant, explores the History of the Esquimalt and Nanaimo (E&N) Railway and the journey across Canada that the nation's first prime minister, Sir John A, MacDonald, took in order to drive the last spike in the railway at Shawnigan Lake 125 years ago. *Oddities of the Shawnigan Lake Museum* by Ruaidhrí Crofton, Museum Volunteer, is an interactive game (fun for both children and adults alike) where the participant is given 10 "unique" artifacts that are found in the museum's collection, and asked to identify its use in 30 seconds or less! Other presentations playing in the museum's theatre are *Shawnigan Lake 1862-1930*, *Shawnigan Lake 1930s*, *Shawnigan Lake 1940s*, *The Kinsol Trestle*, *The Malahat*, *Shawnigan: Then and Now*, *Museum Reno 2007*, and many more! So when you next drop by to visit us at the museum, be sure to have a look at one of the wonderful presentations that explore and interpret the history of Shawnigan Lake, BC!

"History is who we  
are and why we  
are the way we  
are."

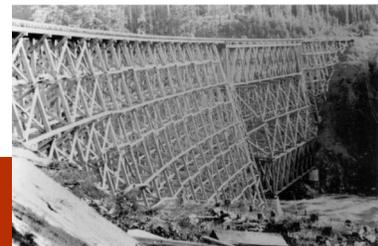
-David C.  
McCullough

## Grand Re-Opening of the Kinsol Trestle

In 1911, the Canadian National Pacific Railway established a rail line on Vancouver Island to connect Victoria to Nootka Sound. Whilst the line never made it to its intended location of Nootka Sound, there was still something very special about this particular rail line. That something special was the Kinsol Trestle. Completed in 1920, the trestle is the largest Howe truss, bent pile wooden trestle left in the world. (at 187.6 m long and 38 m high) However, after the last train crossed the trestle on June 20th, 1979 and the rails were removed in 1983, the fate of the historic trestle was uncertain. Ever since the early 1980s, advocates of the trestle had tried to have it restored and/ or dedicated as a heritage structure, but to no avail.

Vandalism and neglect as well as two fires took a toll on the structure and eventually, the north and south ends of the trestle were removed to try to discourage people from crossing the unsafe bridge. Finally, after years of campaigning to save the historic Kinsol Trestle, rehabilitation work was started in 2010, and on July 28th, 2011, the trestle was officially reopened with a ribbon cutting ceremony, speeches, bagpipes, and even a group of penny-farthing bicycles riding over the newly renovated pathway on the top of the trestle which, by the way, is part of the Trans Canada

Trail. For more information on the Kinsol Trestle as well as maps, photos, and links to the trestle webcam, visit our website at [www.shawniganlakemuseum.com](http://www.shawniganlakemuseum.com) and click on "Kinsol Trestle" on the left side of the website.



# Shawnigan Lake's Claim to Fame (Continued from pg.1)

or so onlookers.

Though the ceremony was short, it was of marked significance. It is an exciting thought, at least to those with a zest for history, to imagine one of the most important founding Fathers of our nation stepping off the train at Shawnigan and gazing in awe at the beauty of our lake. The ceremony held at Shawnigan was doubly important for not only did it initiate the creation of many flourishing communities along the island, it also signified the solidification of British Columbia's Confederation with the Dominion. This is an immensely important claim to fame that our community should proudly remember. Though this year we may miss out on the opportunity to properly commemorate the Last Spike, we have high hopes that next year the train may once again be up and running. One thing is certain: we must keep the memory alive, for it is a vital part of our community's history.



Above: The plaque at the site of the last spike.

## Museum Gift Shop

Shawnigan Lake Museum's gift shop has a wide variety of Shawnigan Lake souvenirs for sale. In honour of the re-opening of the historic Kinsol Trestle, we have trestle t-shirts available in most sizes with a choice between blue & white, & navy blue women's tees for \$18. We also have trestle mugs, useful for enjoying a warm cup of tea or coffee, for only \$10. New to the museum's gift shop are Shawnigan Lake Historical Society and Gold Rushes of BC t-shirts. The Shawnigan Lake Historical Society t-shirts come in grey or white and have the museum's welcome sign on the upper left side and are available for \$10. The Gold Rushes of BC t-shirts are white & have a painting of a man panning for gold on the front, and a list of all of the BC gold rushes on the back. This shirt is available for \$15. In addition to the items listed here, the museum also has many other items such as books, post cards, puzzles, magnets, and more! Remember that all gift store purchases go to the museum to help with museum functions, such as developing new programs for the public and upgrading existing programs and exhibits. Thank you for your support!



## Did you know?

~ **Canada has a total of 49,422 kilometers (30,709 miles) of train tracks across the country?**



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# Membership!



Are you a museum member? If you are, have you renewed yet? If you aren't, drop by and see us as we would love to organize a membership for you. Membership to the museum is only \$10 for an individual or \$15 for a family **and** you receive a 2012 museum calendar, free!

## Support Your Museum with at Thrifty's Smile Card!

You can support the **Shawnigan Lake Museum** by using a **Thrifty Foods Smile Card** to purchase your groceries. This is a wonderful way to support our society with **no cost to you!**

Please drop by the museum **to pick up a dedicated card**. You will **NOT** be supporting the museum if you get a card at Thrifty's.

1. When you are at any Thrifty's store, before the cashier starts to ring your groceries through, "load" your card (by cash, bank card, or credit card.)
2. The amount you load is up to you— some people estimate their purchase and put it on that amount...others just put \$50, \$100, \$200, etc. Any unspent \$\$ stays on your card for next time.
3. Each time you shop, you simply present your card to the cashier to pay for your groceries. The museum receives a percentage of the total "loaded" on your card each month from Thrifty Foods.



Money raised will go towards upgrading museum programs. Please help us reach our goals by using a **Thrifty Foods Smile Card**.