

## **Summary of the Provincial Advocacy Meeting**

Held on June 1, 2018 at 7pm at the Whistler Museum in Whistler, BC

### **Introduction-**

Welcome to all and thanks to those who travelled to Whistler for the meeting. Whistler, Squamish, North Vancouver, Cumberland, Victoria, Fraser Valley, Kaslo, were among the communities represented at the meeting as well as provincial agencies Rec Sites and Trails BC and BC Parks.

### **Video Presentation- "Mountain Biking in BC; Resources to Recreation"**

Produced by Andreas Hestler, Dean Payne and Cody Graham

<https://vimeo.com/270783350>

### **Grant Lamont / Whistler Trail Solutions / MBTA Director**

A brief history of how this meeting came about and what we are trying to achieve by forming a provincial organization. The time has come for a provincial organization to represent the communities and other stakeholders' interests when it comes to mountain biking.

MTB is growing by leaps and bounds in the tourism industry in both destination and regional travel markets. Communities are being transformed by creating positive and healthy amenities such as trails and supporting infrastructure in most cases supported with a foundation of volunteer labour and passion. While it all seems good to the outside eye to be just cruising along the opportunity is turning into a burden for these groups.

Goal: To Endorse the BC Council and get MTB at the table with the 6 other major recreation groups in BC. Mountain bikers are incredibly well organized as a user group in our own regions but lack the representation at a Provincial Level to be involved in the decisions that affect our land use before they happen.

### **Martin Littlejohn, Executive Director / MBTA**

Until around 2009 we could only promote lift access-bike parks, now we have over 30 communities and 8 resorts in the province promoting mountain bike tourism. The mountain bike economy is supporting jobs in these communities and generating significant tax revenue. In BC there is funding to build trails and promote trails, but the task of maintaining trails falls largely on volunteer efforts. At the 2017 MTB Tourism Symposium we heard many club representatives voice concern about their capacity to keep up with the growing demand. The role of the clubs is fundamental to the sustainability of the trails and the user's experience and needs to be adequately supported if we want to see the opportunities continue to grow for both visitors and locals alike.

IMBA Canada has had some difficult times in recent years, but it has re-emerged as a strong voice for trail advocacy in Canada. IMBA Canada's BC Council is well positioned to take on the role of mountain bike trail advocacy and work toward increasing capacity for trail maintenance and management across the province.

### **John Hawkings, Director / Recreation Sites and Trails BC**

Mountain Biking needs a voice at the provincial land managers table or it risks being left out of the consultations. We don't want a situation like in the US where trail access is a real struggle. It's critical that mountain bikers have a unified voice. There is great representation at this

meeting from the Sea to Sky region, but it will be vitally important to engage and hear from communities from around BC.

### **AJ Strawson, Executive Director / IMBA CANADA**

AJ updated the group on the current work being done by the BC Council. Jay Darbyshire, the current chair, was unable to attend due to a prior commitment. Doug Topp, former chair, was present. Andreas Hestler, BC Council Sea-To-Sky Rep, was unable to attend at the last minute due to unexpected circumstances.

### **Slide Presentation- "IMBA Canada BC Council; Building a BC MTB Advocacy Coalition"**

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1zJeKcU\\_9coQCw8iH-8baytOvdjksZ-AG9vaTASTAAAl/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1zJeKcU_9coQCw8iH-8baytOvdjksZ-AG9vaTASTAAAl/edit?usp=sharing)

IMBA Canada recognizes that most of the discussion in Canada around land use happens at the provincial level. They have seen what has happened in the US and want to avoid that situation here by becoming a stronger entity for trail advocacy. They recognize the strength that comes from the grassroots and want to harness that in the BC Council while empowering the people at the ground level.

The BC Council will attend the Outdoor Recreation Council of BC's AGM in Yarrow on June 16 and will be represented by Cooper Quinn (NSMBA) as ORC Liaison. AJ and Cooper encourage all mtb clubs to join ORC to further strengthen mountain biking's voice on the ORC (Annual fees are very reasonable – less than \$100 for a club to join. One of the benefits is receiving public notices for all recreation land use tenure applications).

Regional representation on the BC Council is based on the tourism regions. Council members not only represent their region but also bring a diverse skill set to the committee.

Communication with clubs across the province is being facilitated by using a collaboration platform called SLACK. It's been very successful so far for sharing information and ongoing discussions on a range of issues.

Successes so far include helping communities secure municipal grants including multi-year municipal funding for Squamish. Highlighting best practices such as the Kootenay Columbia Trails Society and the Shuswap Trails Alliance for their ability to secure regional funding involving multiple communities.

BC Council is applying to present at the Union of BC Municipalities Conference, September 10-14 in Whistler.

The BC Council has been nominated to have a seat at the Provincial Trail Advisory Board. If successful it will be the first time that mountain biking will be officially represented on this provincial committee.

There will be an MTB Advocacy Symposium this fall in North Vancouver; Capilano University, October 12-14. The theme will be "Building Diverse Mountain Bike Communities".

Future BC Council initiatives to include:

- New sources of funding for trails through tourism partnerships and direct lobbying efforts with the provincial government.
- Improve understanding and relationships with the resource sector.
- Regional advocacy gatherings and lobbying support.
- Develop BC Council funding model so that the organization becomes fiscally sustainable and able to have a dedicated staff person for handling day to day affairs.

### **General Discussion and Comments from the Floor:**

Indigenous peoples should be represented or engaged with the council as they are a fundamental part of the land use decision process. The BC Council will aim to build those relationships and provide guidance for communities to help build local relationships with First Nations.

The BC Council is just over 2 years old and lacks stakeholder awareness, however it has great potential and it hopes that this meeting represents an endorsement and validation from mtb stakeholders to proceed with the work that needs to be done. We need to have more meetings like this in each region of BC.

Will the BC Council have a membership structure? Yes, in order to represent stakeholders on the ORC committees a membership structure is required and the council is working towards this.

IMBA Canada is a completely separate entity from IMBA in the United States and although changing the name is a consideration there are many reasons for keeping the name as it is.

The regional approach to trail stewardship like the KCTS in Rossland/Trail area is a great model that could be applied elsewhere in the province.

How can clubs contact their regional reps on the BC Council? The website is being developed however for now stakeholders can contact AJ Strawson through the IMBA Canada website and he will direct messages to the appropriate council member.

The SLACK tool has been very helpful in connecting clubs that otherwise feel like they are often working in isolation.

There is a strong representation of women at the meeting. Will the BC Council make efforts to include women on the council as well as people of colour? IMBA Canada recognizes the need to be more diverse and will be addressing that in future board nominations.

There is data out there like the Sea to Sky Mountain Bike Economic Impact Studies <https://www.mbta.ca/resources/research/> which the council and communities can leverage to make a case for greater support.

In the Kootenays there is a lot of funding for wildfire interface work. Much of it is phased from planning to implementation and has the potential to integrate trail planning with wildfire interface planning.

Having a presence at UBCM is very important whether it is a presentation or part of the expo. Being seen by the communities attending sends an important message. The BC Council and

the MBTA could jointly apply to demonstrate the balance and close relationship between recreational resource stewardship and tourism economic opportunities.

Which user groups does RSTBC recognize as being well organized in the province and are there lessons for the BC Council? The big six - snowmobiling, dirt biking, horse council, atv, etc, have the strongest voice and what most of them have in common is paid administrators. One difference that the mountain bikers have is a much younger demographic. Many of the other organizations have been in existence for many decades.

BC Adventure Smart works around the province for search and rescue. More calls in BC than the rest of Canada combined. The organizational structure used by search and rescue in the province could be a good model for regional representation to look at for the BC Council.

Vancouver Island has unique issues given that much of the land is privately owned by the forestry companies. How to overcome stigma around spending public money on private land. Capacity building at the local level is key for empowering local clubs to have these important conversations.

A provincial trail pass initiative is a lofty idea that is being proposed but challenging to implement. We need to educate and establish a culture of giving back to the trails when we visit a community to go mountain biking. Experience shows that many mountain bikers are reluctant to give money for trails regardless of the fact that they buy other passes for skiing, rec centres, etc.

Other public funding ideas included:

- Provincial mountain bike advocacy tax on sale of mountain bikes over \$1000.
- Advocacy assessment on club membership fees.
- Public relations campaign to encourage public to purchase trail pass. Package trail passes with annual memberships.
- Look at other jurisdictions that have successfully implemented trail passes e.g. Vermont

RSTBC cautioned about the challenges of implementing a provincial trail pass as many of the other big rec user groups in the province have been struggling with this issue for a long time. BC Snowmobile Federation is divided over implementing a user funding model. BCORMA has implemented several different models. Mountain Biking should collaborate with these other user groups as we are all advocating for access to crown land and need to figure out how to pay for it and make it work.

Where we focus our effort will be key. If the funding model is only focused at the provincial level it could overlook some of the opportunities that exist at the regional and local levels. The approach needs to be multi-faceted.

**Meeting Attendees:**

Abby Morgan	FLNRO
AJ Strawson	IMBA Canada
Caroline Depatie	Capilano University
Christine Reid	NSMBA
Cooper Quinn	NSMBA

Craig McKenzie	WORCA
Cynthia Young	NSMBA
Dan Raymond	Trail builder
Daniel Cammiade	Nature Trails Society - Victoria
Donna Green	MBTA
Doug Topp	BC Council
Grant Lamont	Whistler Trail Solutions/MBTA
Helen Benyon	SORCA
Jeff Norman	SORCA
John Hawkings	RSTBC
Jonathan Skelcher	NSMBA
Khoa Lam	Cycles Lambert
Marie Beck	Kaslo MTB Group
Martin Littlejohn	MBTA
Megan Lalonde	Pique Newsmagazine
Natan Kwan	UROC
Nicola Bickerton	FLNRO
Penny Deck	NSMBA
Sandra Riches	Adventure Smart
Sarah Fennell	BC Parks
Scott Shaw	FLNRO
Sean Bickerton	WORCA
Todd Hellinga	WORCA

**Contact:**

For more information about the IMBA Canada BC Council, please contact AJ Strawson, Executive Director, IMBA Canada [aj.strawson@imbacanada.com](mailto:aj.strawson@imbacanada.com) or Jay Darbyshire, Chair, BC Council [jay.darby@imbacanada.com](mailto:jay.darby@imbacanada.com)