



Bruce Trail CONSERVANCY

Volunteer Orientation Manual

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Volunteer Orientation Manual

This Volunteer Orientation Manual is part one in the training process for new volunteers. This manual provides volunteers with information about the Bruce Trail Conservancy, its mission, vision and values, the land securement and fundraising programs, the volunteer process and volunteer positions. The second part of the training process is the Volunteer Training Manual.

The Bruce Trail Conservancy

The Bruce Trail is the oldest and longest continuous footpath in Canada. It runs along the Niagara Escarpment from Niagara to Tobermory, spanning approximately 900 km of main trail and 400 km of associated side trails.

The Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC) is one of Canada's most respected conservation groups. The BTC was formed to act as a guiding body for the planning, building and management of the Trail. The BTC now partners with Government, the various Conservation Authorities and parks along the Escarpment, the Ontario Heritage Trust, private landowners and many other groups to promote conservation of the Niagara Escarpment.

The Conservancy and its membership are committed to the preservation of the Niagara Escarpment and to the securement of the Bruce Trail on public land. There are currently over 10,000 members of the BTC and approximately 1500 active volunteers. Every aspect of the Conservancy and Club activities involve volunteers: from organizing and leading hikes, to trail maintenance, land stewardship, club enews, Club and Conservancy Boards of Directors, committees, keeping in touch with landowners over whose properties the Trail crosses, land securement and many more.

Every year, over 400,000 visits are made to the Trail as people walk, cross country-ski, snowshoe, watch wildlife, take photographs and admire the glorious scenery of the Escarpment. By providing an opportunity to explore the Escarpment, the Trail has helped increase awareness of the uniqueness and rich diversity of this landform. The Bruce Trail was instrumental in the Escarpment being named a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve.

Today 72.1% of the Bruce Trail is secure and safe from development. However, 27.9% of the Bruce Trail corridor is vulnerable. The Bruce Trail Conservancy is committed to securing the corridor in its entirety.

Hiking is an important activity of the BTC members, and an important way of engendering support for our organization's goals of acquiring land along the Niagara Escarpment for its permanent protection. The hiking programs for BTC members are organized by the BTC Clubs, which also are responsible for maintenance of the Bruce Trail.

The Bruce Trail Conservancy's Mission, Vision and Values

Mission: Preserving a ribbon of wilderness, for everyone, forever.

Vision: The Bruce Trail secured within a permanently protected natural corridor along the Niagara Escarpment.

Values: The Bruce Trail Conservancy will pursue excellence in all our actions and outcomes. We emphasize the following Values as core to our efforts:

Commitment

We encourage, foster and benefit from the commitment of excellence from our supporters – members, volunteers, donors and staff – to achieve our vision.

Integrity

We conduct ourselves in accordance with the highest standards of professional and personal behaviour and ethics.

Stewardship

We embrace our role in responsible stewardship of the Bruce Trail, the lands in our care, and the organization's resources, for the benefit of all including future generations.

Collaboration

We work cooperatively with landowners, funders and other partners, share best scientific and business practices, and maximize our volunteer resources.

Respect

We show respect for all individuals and groups with whom we interact, recognize our special relationship with landowners, and acknowledge the traditional homeland of the Indigenous peoples of the Escarpment.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

The Bruce Trail Conservancy is committed to preserving a ribbon of wilderness, for everyone, forever. To make that a reality, we must do all that we can to help make the Bruce Trail and our organization a welcoming and inclusive space. We value and welcome diversity, and aim to be an accessible and inclusive community that honours, respects, and reflects the various ways people connect with the Bruce Trail and the Bruce Trail Conservancy

We recognize:

Social inequities can impact all aspects of our lives, including engagement with the outdoors, and with environmental and conservation organizations.

We all have different lived experiences both on and off the Trail that are influenced by race, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical/mental ability, socio-economic status, and many other visible and invisible identities.

Systemic barriers prevent many people from hiking, exploring nature, and engaging with conservation organizations, and many identities have been marginalized, threatened and under-represented in these spaces.

The Bruce Trail Conservancy has a responsibility to remove barriers, address bias and promote inclusion so that all people have the chance to discover and enjoy the benefits of our outdoors spaces and be a valued part of our community.

We commit to:

Fostering, promoting and celebrating an inclusive outdoors where people of all identities are represented and feel welcome.

Cultivating an inclusive culture and environment at the Bruce Trail Conservancy where staff, volunteers and program participants of all identities are encouraged and feel valued.

Identifying and working to remove barriers to accessibility and inclusion in Bruce Trail Conservancy places and spaces.

Seeking and including a variety of voices, perspectives, stories and imagery in our communications that reflect the rich diversity of the communities we serve.

Embedding diversity, equity and inclusion in all plans and strategies.

Approaching this work with respect, transparency, and a willingness to learn and adapt.

We believe:

Exploring nature is good for people's minds and bodies, and the Bruce Trail is a powerful way to connect with the Niagara Escarpment's natural wonders.

Everyone has a right to enjoy and to conserve our natural environment, and should be free to do so without experiencing discrimination.

Everyone should feel represented and included in outdoor spaces and the opportunities they provide.

Just as natural systems are more resilient and better able to adapt to changing conditions when they are biologically diverse, organizations are stronger when they are inclusive and diverse.

Fulfilling the Bruce Trail Conservancy's mission of preserving a ribbon of wilderness, for everyone, forever requires the inclusion of diverse voices and perspectives.

Land Securement

Securing a permanent route for the Bruce Trail, linking parks and natural features, is a long-term objective of the BTC. The securement of a permanent corridor for the Bruce Trail will have lasting benefits for educational use and scientific research while preserving an important part of the priceless legacy of the Niagara Escarpment.

To date over 21,000 acres of Escarpment land have been preserved by the BTC. Over 15,000 acres of this preserved land are cared for by volunteers of the BTC's Land Stewardship program. The BTC is working to secure this corridor by receiving donations of land or by purchasing land. Each year the BTC preserves hundreds of acres of Escarpment landscape and Bruce Trail corridor forever. These securements protect a diverse array of landscape types - wetlands, karst topography, open meadows, caves, towering scarp edges and lush forests - all within the Niagara Escarpment UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve.

Some obstacles to securing the Trail are:

- Lack of money (both public and private)
- That many people hold the incorrect view that the Trail is provided free by some level of government or another organization and is already secure
- The Trail is taken for granted as a feature that has always been there
- Lack of information about all of the options landowners can use to secure land for the Trail

Where the money comes from:

- Membership dues
- Donations by corporations and individuals
- Profits from the sale of guidebooks, calendars and other merchandise
- Government grants
- Bequests and insurance policies

Fundraising

Every year, the BTC raises funds to purchase properties along the Bruce Trail, and to steward that land and the Trail in perpetuity. The nine BTC Clubs also work hard to raise funds for their Clubs and for the BTC by holding special events and undertaking projects. Their support of the BTC's fundraising endeavours is greatly appreciated.

The Bruce Trail Clubs

There are nine regional Clubs:

- Niagara, Queenston to Grimsby
- Iroquoia, Grimsby to Kelso
- Toronto, Kelso to Cheltenham
- Caledon Hills, Cheltenham to Mono Centre
- Dufferin Hi-Land, Mono Centre to Lavender
- Blue Mountains, Lavender to Craigleith
- Beaver Valley, Craigleith to Blantyre
- Sydenham, Blantyre to Wiarton
- Peninsula, Wiarton to Tobermory

Originally the Clubs were formed as part of the planning and construction of the Bruce Trail; they were responsible for locating, designing, creating and building their section of the Trail. Today, each Club is responsible for maintaining its section of the Trail. The Clubs have a number of responsibilities to perform, under the general direction of the BTC. Each of the nine Clubs has an Executive, with representation on the BTC's Board of Directors. Trail maintenance is the responsibility of the Clubs, with re-routes being approved by the BTC Trail Director. Clubs lead organized hikes and publish a newsletter for their members to keep them informed about recent developments, reroutes and upcoming events. Fundraising and public relations are conducted at both the Club level and at the BTC. The Clubs handle landowner relations and negotiations because volunteers are local and know the property owners.

Staff

The effectiveness of the volunteer systems is substantially advanced through help provided by the professional staff located at the Head Office at 55 Head St, Dundas. Currently, there are 23 staff:

Chief Executive Officer

Fund Development:

- VP of Fund Development
- Development Officer
- Planning Giving and Donor Relations Officer
- Development Coordinator
- Database Administrator
- Donor Services Assistant and Office Manager

Finance

- Director of Finance
- Accounting Manager
- Finance Administrator

Conservation and Trail

- Manager of Conservation and Trail
- Manager of GIS and Cartographic Services
- (3) Land Stewardship Coordinator & Ecologist
- Restoration Project Coordinator
- Conservation and Trail Assistant

Land Securement

- VP of Land Securement
- Director of Land Securement
- Land Securement Planner
- Land Securement Specialist

Operations

- VP of Operations

Communications

- Manager of Communications
- Communications Assistant
- Office Assistant

Community Engagement

- Manager of Community Engagement
- Outreach Coordinator
- Membership and Engagement Coordinator
- Volunteer Coordinator

History

- 1960** Ray Lowes provided the vision for the Bruce Trail. He presented the idea for the Trail to the Federation of Ontario Naturalists. The four founders of the Bruce Trail were Norman Pearson, Philip Gosling, Robert McLaren and Ray Lowes.
- 1963** On March 13 the Bruce Trail Conservancy was incorporated
- 1967** The Bruce Trail was completed, making it the oldest long distance footpath in Canada
- 1967** A period of growth and development for the Bruce Trail, memberships grew from 60 to 7500.
- 1977** Eleven local Bruce Trail Clubs were created (later reduced to nine). Campsites were added and more people started to enjoy hiking on the Niagara Escarpment.
- 1971** The Niagara Escarpment Preservation Fund was established by the BTC to raise funds specifically for land acquisition
- 1980** The BTC hired its first full-time staff person
- 1985** The Niagara Escarpment Plan is approved by the Ontario Government
- 1990** The United Nations proclaimed the Niagara Escarpment to be a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve
- 1992** The BTC was awarded the Canadian Environmental Achievement Award and is presented a Certificate of Honour
- 1993** The Annual Campaign was initiated to raise funds for securing the Trail.
- 1995** The BTC received the Lieutenant Governor's Conservation Award, sponsored by the Conservation Council of Ontario
- 1996** The BTC inaugurated the Planned Giving Program to accept bequests
- 1998** The Land Stewardship Program was initiated
- 2002** The BTC received the Niagara Escarpment Achievement Award for the Devil's Monument Lookout Project
- 2002** The BTC was the Provincial and National award winner in the Natural Outdoor Site category from Attractions Canada
- 2004** The BTC was presented with the Partnership Award of Excellence from Conservation Halton for property securement
- 2005** An updated mission statement was created for the BTC
- 2005** The Niagara Escarpment Ecological Land Acquisition Program (NEELAP) gave the BTC the administration duties over \$850,000 for property securement on behalf of the Ministry of Natural Resources
- 2006** The Trail went digital; a full GPS was done of the Trail and GIS technology was used for all mapping
- 2007** The Bruce Trail Association changed its name to the Bruce Trail Conservancy
- 2012** The Bruce Trail Conservancy honoured its past and present volunteers with a huge volunteer celebration
- 2012-2017** Over the course of 5 years The Bruce Trail Conservancy celebrates its 50th Anniversary

Volunteering

Since 1963 volunteers have been the driving force behind the Bruce Trail. The Bruce Trail Conservancy is responsible for maintaining the Trail and keeping its structures safe and accessible. Volunteers are an integral part of this task and are responsible for contacting landowners, marking the route, ongoing trail maintenance, planning hikes in their communities, promoting the Trail and performing a variety of other roles.

From its inception, volunteers have provided the time, commitment and dedication to build the Bruce Trail. When volunteers give time and energy to work in any volunteer position for the Bruce Trail Conservancy, they are helping to achieve one of our most important objectives, to build, steward and maintain the Bruce Trail and its side trails. Without volunteers, we would not have the Bruce Trail to enjoy and this natural beauty would be lost.

As a volunteer for the Bruce Trail Conservancy, you also play an important role in our fundraising program by sharing the message of the work and mission of the organization. You are our best promoters, as you are involved and can inspire others to become members or donors and support the vital work we do! Even more, our volunteers are often donors themselves and we are grateful for that as well.

Volunteer Confidentiality Agreement

Like many organizations, the Bruce Trail Conservancy has information that needs to be kept confidential in order to protect the interests of landowners, members, partners, volunteers and staff. The BTC has a Policy which requires some of its volunteers to sign this Confidentiality Agreement. By signing the agreement, you acknowledge that the Conservancy has told you about the Policy, and that you agree to keep BTC confidential information within the organization.

Volunteers who need to sign the Confidentiality Agreement include:

- BTC and Club Board members
- Members of BTC-level Committees
- Volunteers dealing with trail routing, the Optimum Route, landowner relations and negotiations, and land acquisition
- Land Stewards
- Volunteers who help out at Head Office
- Volunteers in other specific roles, as identified by their clubs

The Confidentiality Agreement can be found in the Volunteer Training Manual.

Volunteer Positions

BTC Committees	Club Communications Committee Finance and Risk Committee Governance Committee Land Securement Committee	Land Stewardship Committee Landowner Relations Committee Trail Development and Maintenance Committee
BTC Positions	BTC Archivist BTC Board Member BTC Office Volunteer	BTC Trail Director Representative to an allied association
Club Positions	Archivist Director at Large Hike Leader Land Steward Land Steward Director Landowner Relations Director Membership Coordinator Newsletter/Publications Director President Secretary	Social Convenor Trail Captain Trail Monitor Trail Coordinator Trail Director Trail Maintenance Treasurer Vice President Volunteer Coordinator Director from Club to the BTC Board Public Relations/Publicity Director

The Club position titles may vary. Not all Clubs have all these positions. Volunteer position descriptions can be found on the BTC website at <https://brucetrail.org/ways-to-get-involved/#volunteer-roles-and-descriptions>

Volunteer Training Resources

Training resources for a variety of volunteer positions are available on the BTC website at <https://brucetrail.org/ways-to-get-involved/#volunteer-resources>.

Please click on this link [Volunteer-Training-Manual-Sept-2026.pdf](#) which has more specific information for Bruce Trail Volunteers.

If you have any questions about the volunteer program, please contact Meghan Croll, Volunteer Coordinator, at mcroll@brucetrail.org or 905-529-6821 ext 228.