

Last timbers being placed on Kinsol Trestle

Fundraising: Campaign still working to collect final \$250,000 to make dream historic restoration of huge span a reality

By Lexi Baines, The Citizen
Wednesday, February 23, 2011

The rehabilitation of the historic and unique Kinsol Trestle has achieved a major milestone with the placing of the last and largest of the underslung truss spans on the central span over the Koksilah River.

Although opening day is still more than a month away, that crossing will be the first since 1979 when the bridge was closed, and it will reconnect to the rest of the Island one of the largest wooden bridges in the world and the highest wood trestle remaining in the Commonwealth.

However, with an opening day scheduled for the end of March, the Save the Historic Kinsol Trestle fundraising campaign still needs to raise about a quarter million dollars towards completing major elements of the project and ensuring that all government funds available for the project are matched.

"The last of the steel trusses are up," said Cowichan Valley Regional District board chair Giles on Monday.

She encouraged Valley residents to search for "Kinsol web cam" online. "You can see that they're putting the decking on it. What a fabulous story. We've got about \$250,000 left to go so that we can do all the pathways and everything leading up to it," she said.

Others are also excited as they see journey's end coming closer, including Yvonne MacNab of Angle 5 Media Productions who is making a documentary of the project.

"It's been awesome. We're not there every day but we've been out there for all the highlights. And we're at multiple sites. I had a camera in Sidney shooting the fabrication of the largest truss and then we tried to get it going up the Malahat which was kind of neat. We were there when they reassembled it and put the largest truss in," she said.

MacNab's group have been interviewing some of the people that have volunteered on the project and documenting the many challenges the professionals have faced.

"There's a lot of interesting layers to build into the Kinsol's history. At the start, we were able to convince the Ministry of Transportation to take us up in a helicopter so we have pre-restoration footage in high definition. It's absolutely dynamite and we're hoping that when the trestle's finished that we can go up again with the ministry and get it then, too."

She said her company was also instrumental in getting the web cam for the site, too.

"I had connections inside the ministry and they were awesome in donating that for our community.

I approached them because I was interested in time lapsing the whole project and they said, 'yeah, what a great idea.' Now, more and more people are watching it. It really showed the partnership between the CVRD and the ministry and private companies like myself."

MacNab's group are looking forward to the project's completion.

"What's really been fantastic is there is this gem and we have taken it for granted but when you look outside of this community people are just enthralled," she said.

Other officials are also more than ready to see the project finally finished.

Norm Olive, the CVRD's manager of capital projects said this week that the installation of the trusses is a critical milestone in the Kinsol Trestle's rehabilitation, enabling a missing link in the 22,000-kilometre Trans Canada Trail to be used again.

The trestle has been closed for 32 years.

"These lifts were extremely complex and the installation required a great deal of forethought and attention to detail on part of the entire project team," Olive said.

"Getting the trusses in place safely and successfully was a team effort," he continued. "We would like to specifically commend the work of several Island-based businesses in addition to Macdonald and Lawrence and Ramsay Machine Works, including Knappett Construction, Advantage Crane and Able Roped Access."

Mike Coleman of the Kinsol fundraising campaign urged supporters this week to dig a little deeper to help the project over the top by reaching funding goals.

"The generosity of the community to date has been wonderful. This project is so worthwhile and we want to finish all the core rehabilitation work that is needed at this time," he said.

So, what's next?

Stage III of the project will complete site amenities, such as pathways, viewing platforms, staging area improvements, linking the trestle to the Cowichan Valley Trail and completing a visitor information kiosk and donor recognition wall.

Donations can be made at www.kinsol.ca or by calling 250-709-1087, or dropping in at 135 Third St. in Duncan.