

Reborn trestle takes shape under camera's eye

By Krista Siefken - Cowichan News Leader Pictorial
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It's a good time to be the Kinsol Trestle.

The historic monument's rehabilitation is almost complete, and it's the star subject of a documentary that's also nearing the end of the line.

Filming the trestle's transformation is Yvonne Macnab and her small but professional crew.

"I knew we couldn't miss filming this," said Macnab, who spent seven years reporting on the challenges of saving the troubled trestle as an island television reporter.

Macnab had decided to start her own production company at a fortuitous time: just as rehab work on the trestle began.

Since that time about a year ago, Macnab — with award-winning shooters like Jesse Reardon — has been at the trestle for all the highlights of its restoration.

"When they took the bents out and they were craning those out," she recalled, "it was unbelievable to see these huge timbers flying through the air — that was awesome."

Macnab said she feels a tad like an air traffic controller trying to coordinate shooting around restoration highlights.

"Knowing what is important, or going to be significant, can be nerve-wracking," she said. "Like this week, the largest trusses were craned in and we have to get all kinds of clearance to be in certain areas to film it."

But knowing when to be there has its benefits: Macnab was one of the first people to stand on the trestle's newly restored upper deck.

"I realized, 'Oh my God, I'm on the deck.' It was really a moment, to get there, to think we're almost finished the project," she said. "It was just so moving, just like when we were in the Howe trusses. We'd been shooting the Howe trusses for years — they are, in terms of engineering, probably the most significant part of this trestle — and to actually be able to go in there ... it was just so moving."

"You just sense the history," she added. "Everybody in this community has a tie to this trestle, so it's just profound at times."

Work on the trestle's rehab — and filming on the doc — are expected to wrap up next month.

But Macnab's work is far from over.

"We have to start editing and our work will actually start then," she said. "We've got to put together a cohesive story."

That story has shifted in focus since the start of filming, Macnab explained.

"No one is buying history," she said. "No one could care less about history at this point. Even the History Channel is not buying history, they're not even looking at submissions. So I had to change, after we started, the whole idea of what we were going to film. So that was a bit of a struggle."

She doesn't sound worried, though.

"It's even better than I thought," she summed.

Typically, Macnab said, she would have written a script and lined up a bunch of grants before starting filming. But because she didn't want to miss her chance to capture the Kinsol's transformation from the beginning, and because she's a first-time documentary director, Macnab decided to work backward.

Which means she'll start applying for grants during the film's editing process, and is still searching for a distributor.

"We'll know a little bit more once we starting piecing it together," she said.

TV broadcasters and even theatrical release are being mullied.

"We have dreams of entering it into the film festivals in the States and in Toronto, so we're hoping it will be of that calibre, to be shown in some of those bigger film festivals," she added.

A Cowichan screening is a must, Macnab promised, and a portion of the film's profit will be dedicated to maintaining the trestle.

But for now, Macnab is just excited to share what she's seen.

"You feel this huge responsibility," she admitted. "What if I mess up? What if I didn't do a good enough job? You hear all of those little voices playing their own reel in the back of your head — and then you look at the footage, and you say, 'That's amazing.'"

Asked the name of her documentary, Macnab laughs.

"There's no title yet — A Troubled Bridge Over Water?" she joked.

"But it's not troubled anymore."

Anyone interested in becoming a financial partner in Macnab's documentary can contact productions@angle5.ca.