

Transport Action AGM

Sept 17, 2011

President's Report - Catherine Verrall

It is sometimes good to look back at what we have accomplished, and then look forward to our role in the challenging future.. I'll look at the last 10 years because that is what I know about. (And I will use the name T2000 because that is what we were called until last year when we became Transport Action)

10 years ago, George Wooldridge, then in his early 20's with his own special skills and passion, rescued Transport 2000 Prairie from petering out, and charged us on our way. Since then, we in the Prairie Region have challenged the national organization to make some significant changes, changes we first made here.

- the low, new-member rate (this we did catch from T2 Atlantic)
- the student and low -income membership rate
- Thanks especially to Melissa Northe and Terri Sleeva, we became aware that mobility for persons with disability must be a real part of Transport 2000 's mandate. So first here in Prairie, and then in the national organization, the Director of Disability Issues became an important executive position. In this role, Melissa has made a phenomenal number of contacts, doing research, meeting with governments, making reports, and shaking us up...
- We had the first woman president... and I think that in Prairie we have far more women members than in the whole of the rest of the national organization put together!
- The Regina Citizens' Public Transit Coalition was working since 2000. Gradually most of the active people in that group became T2 members.
 - Our Terri Sleeva has steered the Coalition into finally achieving the low income transit pass for persons on provincial social assistance, which later spread to Saskatoon and other Saskatchewan communities.
 - Then the same low income fare was extended to Para Transit in Regina.
- For several years we mounted a determined campaign to bring back VIA, but that is in abeyance until ...
- A railway we did have a successful part in, is the Last Mountain Rail, now carrying freight between Regina and Davidson, on track saved from being sold for scrap by the CNR.
- Transport 2000 under, President Martin Wooldridge, organized the first symposium in Saskatoon which brought various stakeholders together and

launched the community activism which eventually bought the track. .. So it is saved for passengers in the future (with much upgrading).

- In Regina we have been unique in working hard on pedestrian issues, and working with the Canadian Union of Postal Workers ... they walk too, especially on winter sidewalks (so do transit riders).
- We have built a mutually beneficial relationship with Saskatchewan's bus company, the STC.
- Through our well-attended public forums, and many presentations to city council, we have connected transportation with many other issues: environment, libraries, urban planning, health, water, social justice, peace.
 - Especially and repeatedly we have shown public transportation is a major key to combatting , living with, climate upheaval.... as well as “peak” oil.
 - We have co-operated with a variety of groups working for global healing such as the Making Peace Vigil and the Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation (SCIC)

Now into the threatening future.

The life-supports we have been entrusted with are being rapidly destroyed by our one species, the planetary bus we humans have built seems headed for the precipice .. what can we do ? This little book put together by a Haida artist, Michael Yahgulanaas gives an answer. The story of the Hummingbird comes from the Quechan people of South America. The Haida have a similar story:

The forest was burning. All the animals huddled together in despair. But the tiny hummingbird would not abandon the forest. She flew quickly to the stream, picked up a single drop of water in her beak , and dropped it on the fire. Back and forth, over and over, she kept on.

Bear called “Little Hummingbird, what are you doing?”

Without stopping, she looked down at all the animals, with all their excuses, said “I am doing what I can”.

Imagine that many or all of the animals did what they could....

The Dalai Lama writes “*the need for a sense of universal responsibility affects every aspect of modern life*” because now as never before, so many people around the world are working together with a new sense of universal responsibility that he has hope. But he says: “*We must take into account that great love and great achievements involve great risk. We must act before it is too late.*” We must do what we can. And we know that transportation is a big part of the key.