

Ribbons of Green column, Vernon Morning Star – August 30 2017

Turtle Mountain Trails

by Ingrid Neumann, Ribbons of Green Trails Society

Where can you walk in Vernon to climb a former ski jump hill, follow a historic irrigation channel, meander beside an ancient lava flow wall, and absorb panoramic views of the Vernon valley? The trails on Turtle Mountain offer all of these features and more!

Turtle Mountain, located west of Alexis Park Drive, offers three distinct trails:

Nel's Leap Trail is situated on a former ski jump hill. In February 1929, ski jumpers from around the world came to Vernon to participate in an exhibition which included world champion Nels Nelsen from Revelstoke. Nelsen, a five time Canadian champion, held the world record of 240 feet. Thousands of spectators flocked to this hillside to witness Nel's leap whereby the Vernon News reported: "Nels Nelsen whizzes through the air and travels 1,600 feet down mountain side in 11 seconds – glorious weather contributes to enjoyment of large crowd..."

Several interpretive signs are located along the winding Nel's Leap path and a bird's eye view of Vernon is enjoyed at the summit of the trail. This steep trail connects Alexis Park Drive to the Grey Canal Turtle Mountain trail, creating a loop for hikers.

The trailhead for Nel's Leap is located next to the Venture Training Centre, at the west end of 43rd Avenue and Alexis Park Drive.

Grey Canal Turtle Mountain Trail contains sections of the Grey Canal, once BC's largest irrigation system that supplied more water to Vernon and area than to the City of Vancouver. As you hike along the trail you can't miss a section of the Grey Canal called the 'Knight Siphon', a steel pipe measuring 630 meters long and 50 cm in diameter.

A goal of the Ribbons of Green Trails Society is to create a public continuous hiking trail system that retraces 50 km of the old canal alignment around the entire valley from Coldstream to Okanagan Lake.

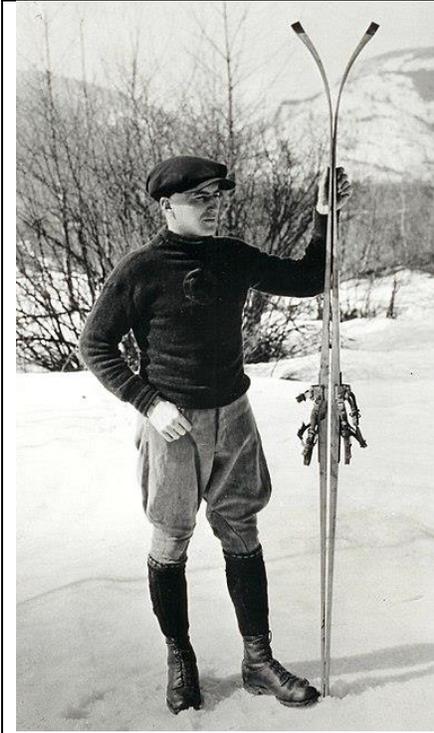
To access the Grey Canal trailheads: from Alexis Park Drive turn west onto Turtle Mountain Boulevard and continue to the parking lot, at the subdivision entrance. From the parking lot, the Grey Canal trail proceeds in two different directions:

a) **North of Turtle Mountain Boulevard** the 0.7 km trail is gravel and loose rock, with some steep sections. A boardwalk hugs an ancient lava flow wall created many million years ago. Glance in the opposite direction to admire the great views of Swan Lake, Silver Star, Middleton Mountain and the city.

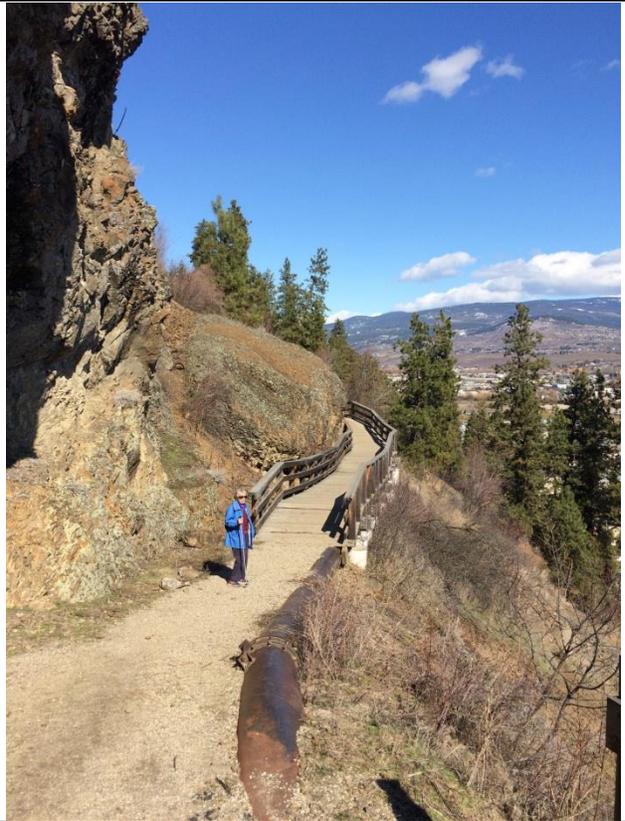
b) **West of Turtle Mountain Boulevard**, the trail is gravel and flat for 0.4 km, suitable for strollers and wheelchairs. Dogs must be on leash. Enjoy the expansive views of Mission Hill, Okanagan Lake with Terrace Mountain in the background.

Rocky Ridge Park Trail, heading west of the parking lot, turn left behind Razorback Court and continue along a short 0.4km trail to a wooden stairway that leads up to Rocky Ridge Park. Perched on a basalt knoll, Rocky Ridge Park awards an outstanding 360° view of Greater Vernon. Beware of Prickly Pear cactus; not recommended for dog walking.

Turtle Mountain offers a variety of trails retracing historical moments of Vernon's past.



Nels Leap trail was named after Nels Nelsen, world champion ski jumper.
Photo from Wikipedia webpage
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nels_Nelsen



Grey Canal Turtle Mountain trail follows a historical water irrigation route
Photo by Ingrid Neumann