

The Bruce Trail turns 50

More than 400 Bruce Trail Conservancy supporters gathered at the in Tobermory June 10 to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the opening of the Bruce Trail.

Hundreds gathered to open the Bruce Trail, a hiking trail spanning the Escarpment from Niagara to Tobermory, June 10, 1967. Fast forward 50 years and on the same date, in the same spot, hundreds of members of the next generation celebrated 50 years of Canada's longest and oldest marked footpath.

The Bruce Trail has always been more than a simple footpath. The founding members truly designed the Bruce Trail as a means for conservation. Their idea was to create a footpath along the Escarpment so that people could explore and appreciate the Escarpment's unique beauty and ecological importance first hand. In their minds, once people had the opportunity to experience the Niagara Escarpment they too would want to join in the effort to preserve its irreplaceable landscape.

Today, the Bruce Trail is enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of people annually. Understanding the importance of protecting the land they love to explore, Bruce Trail Conservancy supporters have spent that last 50 years working to ensure the next generation of explorers have access to the most special of places along the Niagara Escarpment. All stand committed to ensuring that these lands are forever preserved and cared for, for all to enjoy and benefit from. The Bruce Trail Conservancy is now responsible for the preservation of more than 11,000 acres along the Niagara Escarpment, and each year more preserved land is added to the trail's conservation corridor.

During his address June 10, Dr. Philip Gosling, Order of Canada recipient and founding member of the Bruce Trail, recalled the early years and the local families who provided outstanding support in creating the Trail in the most remote region of the Niagara Escarpment. He spoke passionately about the dedication of the volunteers and landowners over the past 50 years, and the need to diligently move forward with the Bruce Trail Conservancy's mission of a permanently protected corridor along the Niagara Escarpment that contains the Trail.

Speaking to the future, Bruce Trail Conservancy CEO Beth Gilhespy told the impassioned crowd, "Our challenge in the next 50 years will be to ensure that our ribbon of wilderness along the Niagara Escarpment prevails. Our success will depend on the same things it depended on 50 years ago: a dedicated corps of volunteers, landowners and donors who will work with us to ensure a route for our footpath is secure, and a Bruce Trail that still inspires people of all ages, and especially young people, to explore and find the same passion we all have found on the Bruce Trail . . . that ribbon of wilderness, that wild and beautiful refuge."