



Bruce Trail
CONSERVANCY

Challenges and Opportunities during the Pandemic

December 10, 2020

Change, Change, Lots of Change – Challenges & Opportunities



Challenges - Early in the Pandemic

- Closed the Bruce Trail for the first time ever
- Closed our office space and had everyone work from home
 - These 2 factors created a significant dip in our membership numbers
 - Unable to send out the hard copy pieces of our membership renewal series
 - Response times for customer service were lower than usual
 - No volunteers able to help either in the office or on the Trail

Opportunities – Early in the Pandemic

- Introduction of more digital services
- Explored new ways to engage members
 - Added in an email series for the membership renewal program
 - Developed and implemented a webinar series for members – each week a new webinar was held for members only
 - Added zoom accounts for Club volunteers to be able to communicate and hold their meetings
 - Helped the Clubs hold virtual AGMs either through zoom or by email and google forms

Opportunities – Mid-Pandemic

- The Bruce Trail re-opens to the public
- Select Staff return to the office
 - Logistics of getting volunteers out on the Trail safely to do trail work was challenging, but gave us an opportunity to engage with them
 - Got the hiking program up and running and introduced new elements to our online hiking system, such as registration, hike limits and made all the hikes for members only
 - Re-started our mailed pieces for the membership renewal program, but kept the email pieces as well to increase member retention
 - Out reach on social media about the trail re-opening provided an opportunity to promote membership and donations and highlight the important work of our volunteers

Challenges – Pandemic Second Wave

- The changing Provincial guidelines have led to some more changes to current practices
 - Reduction in the amount of hikers allowed on an organized hikes – the suddenness of the changes meant that hikers had already signed up for hikes
 - Masks on organized hikes – strongly recommended
 - Several Clubs have paused their hiking program
 - Concern for staff and volunteers in the office
 - Concern for staff who continue to work from home feeling disengaged from the rest of the staff team, staff burnout

Opportunities – Pandemic Second Wave

- Winter Webinar Series for Members only
- Engage Staff through remote training opportunities
- Rise in membership numbers
 - Webinars continue to be a popular source of information, now they are monthly instead of weekly
 - Offering opportunities for staff training in the area of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
 - Membership has been on an upswing – many new members joining as well as increased renewals – many factors involved

Future Opportunities

- Winter Webinars – good value add for Members through the winter months
- Volunteer training webinars – Citizen Science reporting and Diversity and Inclusion
- Offering the opportunity to remotely attend AGMs on an ongoing basis – both Club and BTC
- Electronic component of Membership Renewal Series
- Extra time off at the holidays for Staff – to combat burnout
- Continue to rethink and reexamine practices and look for opportunities to change and improve

MISSION

**Preserving a ribbon of wilderness,
for everyone, forever.**

VISION

The Bruce Trail secured within a permanently protected natural corridor along the Niagara Escarpment.

brucetrail.org

 [TheBruceTrailConservancy](https://www.facebook.com/TheBruceTrailConservancy)

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