



# **Walking the IAT in PEI**

**A Six Day Hike Along  
the 150 km  
International  
Appalachian Trail in  
PEI, Canada**

**Bryson Guptill**

## **Walking the Appalachian Trail in Prince Edward Island**

### **The Appalachian Trail North of Mt. Katahdin**

It seemed like a simple request when someone asked, "Where is the Appalachian Trail in PEI?" In fact, Island Trails, the volunteer-based provincial trail organization in PEI, hadn't given the matter much thought. No one on the Island Trails Board knew exactly where the International Appalachian Trail (IAT) was located, even though the trail in PEI was officially designated back in 2008.

The establishment of a vastly extended section of the Appalachian Trail north of Mt. Katahdin in Maine was the brainchild of a USA-based fisheries biologist named Dick Anderson. Anderson realized that geologically-speaking, the Appalachian Mountains were part of what was at one time the Pangea mountain range, formed more than 200 million years ago. Back then, Europe and North America were still part of the same continent. The Pangea range eventually split into two sections and was engulfed by what is now the Atlantic Ocean - North America now lies to the west of the mid-Atlantic ridge, and Europe lies to the east. That may be fine for those who see the world as it is today, but for those with knowledge of geological plate tectonics, the Appalachian Mountains are really close to the Pyrenees.

"Why not extend the Appalachian Trail north into Canada?" mused Anderson. Geologically they are part of the same range. Eventually, his dreams of a singular trail would grow to include parts of the British Isles, the Iberian Peninsula and even parts of Greenland. Launched at a public meeting in 1995, construction and connection of the new International Appalachian Trail proceeded in Maine, New Brunswick and Quebec. By 2001, it was possible to hike from Forillon National Park in the Gaspé to the Appalachian Trail in Mt. Katahdin (1,085 km), then down the Appalachian Trail to Georgia (3,468 km) and finally on to Florida (3,075 km). Soon the trail was also extended to include trails in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, PEI, and parts of Norway, the UK, France, Spain and Portugal. New trail construction and dreams of an even larger network of trails are continuing right up to the present day.

### **The IAT Route in PEI**

Meanwhile, back on PEI, our minds turned to the immediate matter at hand. Where exactly should the route for the Appalachian Trail in Prince Edward Island be located? For several years, we had known that the Dromore trail, a woodland trail located in the central-eastern part of the province, had been designated part of the IAT. At the time, this seemed like a logical choice. Dromore was the first destination woodland trail completed by Island Trails after the establishment of the Confederation Trail. The Confederation Trail, which has subsequently grown to include 440 km of hard-packed gravel trail, follows the route of the old railway line that linked Island communities together back in the late 1800's. The railway bed was abandoned by Canadian National Railways in 1989, and after intense lobbying by Island Trails, was rebuilt as a hiking and biking trail by the provincial government.

Although Dromore, a woodland trail that's not unlike the Appalachian Trail itself, was a logical choice for part of the IAT, its isolated location meant there were few, if any, international hikers exploring its 8 km

length each year. While PEI was considering how to make the Dromore more accessible, the folks running the IAT were wondering how to connect the PEI trail to segments in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. The logical solution was to have the IAT in PEI run from Borden (formerly where the ferry left for NB - now the landing spot for the Confederation Bridge) to Wood Island's (where the current ferry leaves when it heads to Caribou, Nova Scotia).

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**Island Trails**  
Published by Bryson Guptill  
June 18 at 9:05am · 🌐

We've had some people ask us about the International Appalachian Trail in PEI. This map shows the route you would take to connect the N.B and N.S sections of the trail. Enjoy!



**International Appalachian Trail in PEI**  
Here is a map of the International Appalachian Trail in PEI, Canada. The ...  
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To make the route clear to everyone, we dusted off our somewhat nascent mapping skills and traced the route on Google maps from Borden, up the Confederation Trail to Emerald Junction, then east through the northern boundary of Charlottetown to Mt. Stewart, then southeast along the former Cardigan line to Dromore and finally south to Wood Islands. The entire route was 150 km - a modest sum when one considers the more than 8,000 km of trail that already exists as the International Appalachian trail winds its way from Florida to the eastern tip of Newfoundland.

I posted a map of the trail on the Island Trails PEI Facebook page on a Saturday afternoon in early July. Within hours, I had hundreds of views and many, many likes. By Sunday, we were up to over 2,000 views and by Monday more than 6,000 had looked at the route and shared it with their friends. In that same timeframe, more than 2,000 had followed the link to Google maps and had viewed or downloaded the public map. So now what?

## **A Pilgrimage on the Trail**

With so many people viewing the route on Facebook, Twitter and the Island Trails website, it seemed logical that we should see what it would be like to actually walk this road less travelled. Of course, there was a debate about whether we should walk or take our bikes. After all, the Confederation Trail is used mostly by cyclists. The hard surface supports narrow bike tires and the route is considered somewhat boring to hikers who are used to watching every step they take as they zig zag their way along one of our typical woodland trails.

However, biking on the Confederation Trail had become old hat to some of us. My partner and I had organized a tip-to-tip ride on the Confederation Trail in 2014 as part of the 150th anniversary of PEI joining Confederation. That project, named Uncover the Island, was a tip-to-tip ride with a difference. It was mostly cycling, but it included trail walks too. Four of Island Trails' woodland hiking trails run close to the Confederation Trail, so over 15 Saturdays in the summer and fall, we led more than 150 Islanders on a journey across the Island that covered the full length of the east to west extent of the Confederation Trail as well as four woodland trails located in Breadalbane, Winter River, Dromore and Boughton River. Participants supplied their own bikes, and we supplied transportation back to their cars.

All things considered, we decided to walk from Borden to Wood Islands. It was 150 km, and we thought we could do it in six days. That meant hiking 25 km/day on the first full week of summer – to be sure, this is a prime time to visit Prince Edward Island, but it is perhaps not the best time to be spending six hours/day walking in the hot sun. Never mind - the journey was on!

Before we set out, we had another matter to consider. I had just booked flights for Sue and me to fly to Paris in September. We had just decided to hike the Camino de Santiago from St. Jean Pied de Port in France to Santiago de Compostela in Spain. This is the old pilgrimage route from France over the Pyrenees into Spain. It covers a total distance of 800 km, and we had decided to spend 33 days on the trail. That works out to 25 km/day - the IAT in PEI would be a mini-version of the Camino de Santiago for Sue and me.



Standard IAT blaze that identifies the route of the International Appalachian Trail

### Borden to Kinkora (12 km)

We set off on our route on Wednesday morning, the first week of July. The weather forecast was perfect for hiking - overcast, a chance of showers, and a high of 13 degrees. Everyone on the Island was complaining about the dismal weather, but we were delighted. The lack of sun would keep us from frying along the way, and would also mean we wouldn't have to lug liters of drinking water.

My 25-liter pack contained just the bare essentials - a rain jacket, rain pants, one change of clothes, a packed lunch (a peanut butter and raspberry jam sandwich, on my own homemade bread) and one liter of water - 11 lbs total weight. We only needed to cover 12 kilometers the first day, as we were staying at a B&B in Kinkora. We chose Kinkora because there is no B&B in Emerald Junction - the more natural stopping place where the Borden railway spur joined the main east-west line of the once vibrant Island railway line.

The morning we planned to leave, we were contacted by our friend and fellow hiker Alan MacKenzie – or *Appalachian Spirit*. This isn't his Christian name, but the name he was given by fellow hikers on the Appalachian Trail. He's hiked the entire trail from Georgia to Mt.

Katahdin, not once, but one and one half times. The full route takes six months of walking and Alan is planning to do it again next year. *Appalachian Spirit* is a man full of stories and surprises, and we were delighted when he told us he wanted to join us on the short hike to Kinkora. He showed up in his pre-1990's Ford minivan, which sometimes doubles as his summer and fall residence. *Spirit* doesn't like to be encumbered with mundane worldly possessions, but those he does have, he manages to enjoy to the fullest. The Ford is basic transportation, but it works. Alan has also hiked in places we would love to explore, like Scotland and Spain and even the Isle of Mann. He didn't disappoint us along the way, as his stories were fascinating and fun. We enjoyed every one.



As it turns out, *Spirit* had more than a passing knowledge of the Appalachian Trail in PEI. Back in 2000, when Dick Anderson was promoting the idea of the International Appalachian Trail to his friends and

colleagues in the hiking community in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, *Spirit* was on a similar quest. He had already hiked the Appalachian Trail once and was thinking of how he could promote “through hiking” back home on PEI.

He had heard about a meeting in Halifax to discuss extending the Appalachian Trail north and he decided to take a couple of friends and head to the meeting. He arrived at the Holiday Inn, where the meeting was being held, and walked right in. He and his friends were welcomed by Dick Anderson and friends. As a true Appalachian Trail hiker, Alan had instant credibility with everyone in attendance. He pitched the idea of connecting the Confederation Trail to the New Brunswick section of the Appalachian Trail, and the idea was accepted by the technical committee (it turns out that PEI’s Bonshaw Hills, west of Charlottetown, are part of the Appalachian mountain range). Little did Sue and I know but we were hiking with the man who may have been responsible for bringing the Appalachian Trail to PEI in the first place.

This wasn’t *Spirit’s* only contribution to trail development on PEI. On a sign by the trail in Summerside PEI, the Trans Canada Trail



Foundation points out that the idea for a national hiking trail (now called the Great Trail) was conceived in Summerside by officials that including the former mayor, Basil Stewart. Alan MacKenzie (aka *Appalachian Spirit*) took part in some of those early meetings with Basil Stewart and other Trans Canada Trail officials. Like a hiking version of Forrest Gump, *Spirit* was present during the most seminal moments of trail building in Canada over the past twenty years.

Once on the trail, we soon realized hiking has a big advantage over biking. The difference is speed - not the amount of it, but the lack thereof. We normally hike at a speed of 5 km/hr. We bike at 15 km/hr - sometimes a little faster. When you’re walking, you have time to stop and smell the wild roses. You also have time to stop and read the dozens of Trail Interpretation signs that are posted along the way.

Most of the Interpretation signs on the Confederation Trail were researched and written by Doug Murray. Doug was the Director of Parks with the Government of PEI where the Confederation Trail was being built, and he was a man on a mission with an eye for detail. Not only did he write the interpretation signs themselves, but he also took most of the photographs that are displayed on the signs. After Doug retired from the provincial public service, he joined the Island Trails Board of Directors. In that capacity, he organized much of the trail building that took place on the Confederation Trail over the next 10 years, including overseeing the last few years of construction when Island Trails was completing the final section of the Trans Canada Trail on PEI. During this time, Doug wrote more than 220 Interpretation panels for the Confederation Trail – truly a labour of love.



It's no coincidence that many of the trail interpretation signs prepared by Doug Murray deal with the PEI railway. The west-east portion of the railway from Tignish to Souris was completed in 1875, with many spurs added in later years. In the early days, the railway was the life blood of the Island, making it possible for isolated communities to communicate with one another for the first time. The railway continued to carry passengers until 1969 and the last train rode these rails in 1989.

The Appalachian Trail in PEI starts in Borden, and that's where we started our hike. The community of Port Borden didn't exist prior to 1912. Up to that time, the main branch of the PEI Railway only extended to Cape Traverse, 5 km to the east. The Government of Canada had promised in 1873 to complete the railway in PEI as one of the terms of PEI joining Confederation. Although building the

railway to Cape Traverse technically met this commitment, the Island was only connected to the mainland in winter by boats that were dragged along the ice.

The federal government announced in 1912 that a rail-car carrying ferry would be built to replace the ice boats. A ferry terminal was constructed at Port Borden, named after Sir Robert Borden, the Prime Minister of Canada at that time. A rail spur was built from Emerald Junction to Port Borden and the first ferry made its run to Port Borden from NB in 1917 - at the height of WW1.

We picked up Alan in Kinkora, just east of Emerald Junction, and drove the 12 kms to Borden. The Confederation Trail starts right at the bridge in the community of Borden/Carleton (next to the ubiquitous Tim Horton's donut shop). We crossed the Trans Canada Highway at the traffic lights and set out at a rapid pace. We didn't know then that we would have trouble maintaining an average speed of more than 5 km/hr. The only restaurant in Kinkora closes at 7:00 pm, and it was 4:30 pm when we started walking. It was a brisk walk - too brisk to continue for the next 150 kms.

### **Kinkora to Hunter River (25 km)**

We arrived in Kinkora five minutes before the grill closed at O'Shea's Pub and Eatery, located next to our home for the night, Chez Shea B&B. A man sitting at the bar welcomed us. "You must be the pair who is hiking the trail to Wood Islands". Our reputation preceded us. Turns out he was the husband of Anne Marie Shea, the owner of the B&B. The vegan menu offerings at the pub were a little sparse - I ordered spring rolls and a pub salad. Sue dove into the potato skins. We both enjoyed an Island Red - a craft beer brewed at one of the new speciality breweries in Charlottetown. Then we carried our backpacks next door and met Anne Marie who showed us to our spacious room - not too many clients on the first Wednesday in July.

The town of Kinkora was initially been bypassed by the railway. The main line went through Emerald to the north, but the spur to Port Borden built in 1912 passed through the town and opened it up to new commerce and economic opportunities. The first settlers were farmers and farming continues to be the mainstay of the community today. Agricultural innovators also lived in Kinkora. Ambrose Monaghan and his son John invented a grain threshing machine in 1900 that was in continuous use on the Island until the 1960's. Other innovators, including the McCardle brothers, produced seed for cereal and forage crops. Kinkora continues to prosper as a result of hard work and innovation.

The next morning we woke to chatter downstairs. Anne Marie had just met our friends Debbie and Greg McKee, and they were playing "name that Islander". Greg grew up on the Island and he knows virtually everyone. Sue knows everyone else, or so it seems to me. Anne Marie was trying to persuade Debbie and Greg to join us for breakfast, and after a short pause, they sat down for coffee. We ate a hardy country breakfast - lots of freshly chopped fruit for me, prepared by our host Bonnie Rogerson. Sue and the other guests had a country quiche - it must have been six inches thick.

A few minutes later, Sue's cell phone rang and it was Alan. We had planned to meet Alan at the trailhead at 9:00 am and it was already 9:15. We were a little late - a pattern that would continue all



week. We ate up and headed out the door, but not before Anne Marie convinced the girls to try some black raspberry tea. Very sweet and loaded with caffeine would be my guess. Out the door we went.

Six kilometers north of Kinkora, the trail reaches Emerald Junction. This is the first place we needed to install an IAT-SAT direction sign. Heading to the left would take us west to Kensington and Summerside, but we were headed east towards Charlottetown. I screwed an IAT sign into the pressure treated post, and pointed a directional arrow to the right. We were heading towards Hunter River, 19 kilometers down the main line.



A few kilometers west of where we were standing is the tiny community of Freetown. This community has a special significance for my partner, Sue. It's where her father was raised and where her grandfather, Austin Scales, established his 400 acre potato farm in the early 1920's. Scales was a true entrepreneur who dabbled in all sorts of business ventures. In 1928 he purchased the Dunk River Hydro Electric Company and doubled the size of the power dam. Scales Electric continued to operate until 1965 when it was acquired by Maritime Electric. Austin Scales also established the Island Fertilizer Company in 1930. He played an active role in managing the company until he was well into his 80's. Sue's dad, David Scales, eventually took the reins and expanded Island Fertilizer throughout the Maritimes and into New England. The company was eventually acquired by Irving companies who maintain a large fertilizer operation in Charlottetown.

Just to the east of the Junction is the community of Emerald. In addition to the restored railway station, the community boasts an excellent community centre where local musicians entertain every Friday night. The community is a hopping place during the last week of July when musicians from all over eastern Canada come to Emerald for the Emerald Junction Summerfest. We were a little early for the celebrations, but we did find the washrooms at the community centre open for hikers.



After leaving Emerald, we had a very pleasant hike to Breadalbane, the next community along the route. Alan pointed out an intersection on the road where a tragic train/sleigh collision had taken place during a blinding snow storm a hundred years ago. Train accidents were rare in the early days because of the slow speed the train travelled. There

were other accidents that took place, and they often happened in winter time when visibility was poor.

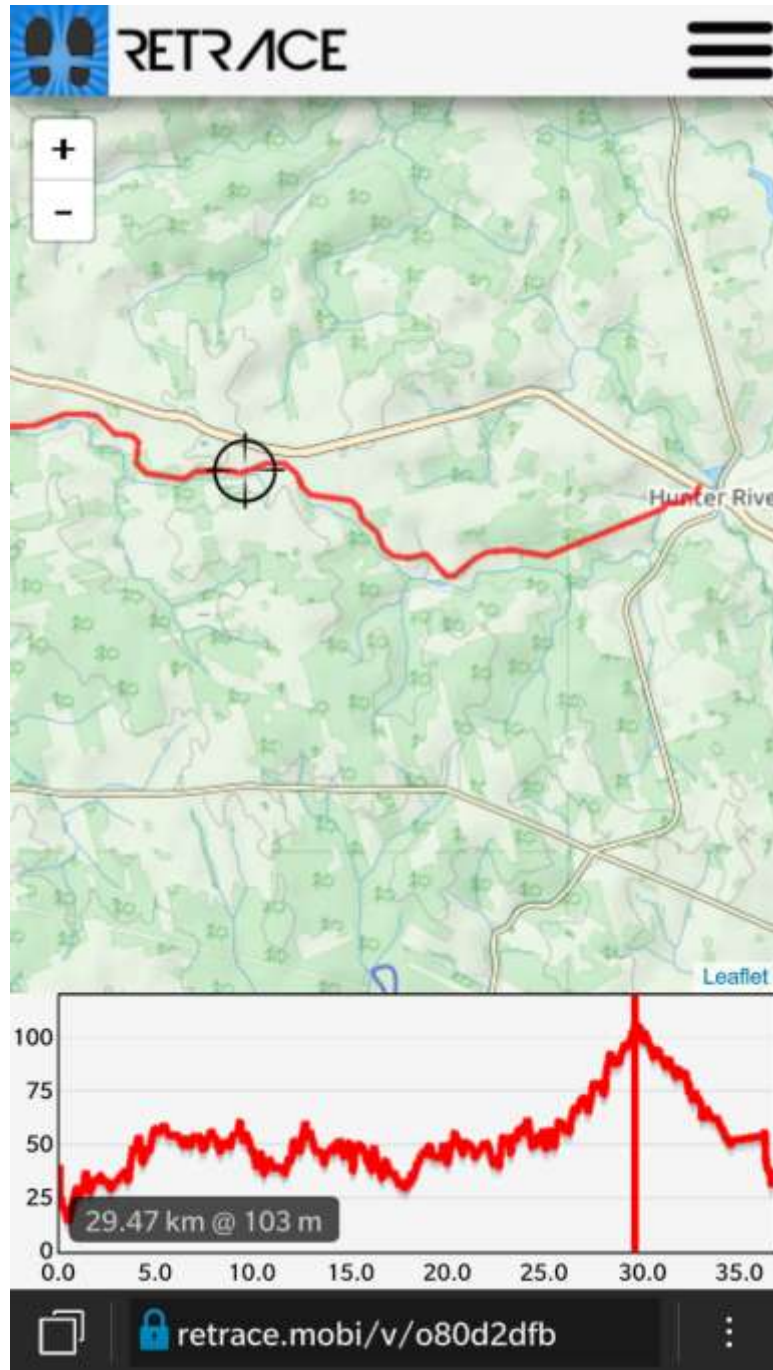
Breadalbane was a bustling community in the 1870's. The Dunk River was dammed and a small mill was constructed on the site. The mill site was acquired by Pomory Murray in 1917. Murray established a small electric light plant there and generated enough electricity to supply the town. A farm and the mill site are still owned by the Wellington Murray family.

Island Trails worked with the community of Breadalbane to expand a nature trail that runs along the north and east branches of the Dunk River. It's one of our most popular hiking trails and is a popular destination year round. The river is especially attractive in the winter when deep snow extends over the fields and down banks of the river. We love snowshoeing here in January, February and March,



especially if our outing is followed by a hearty lunch at By the River Bakery in Hunter River.

With Breadalbane behind us, we started a long slow climb towards the community of Fredericton. The climb is so gradual it's difficult to notice when walking, but the GPS on my phone shows what we were



doing. Alan MacKenzie grew up near Fredericton and this is where we met him a few weeks ago when he was leading a 50 km, two day hike across the Island. The railway ran west to east, but Alan's route ran north to south. People who say the Island is flat have never hiked this route with *Appalachian Spirit*! The 26 km hike with Alan from Fredericton to Victoria took us more than six hours and we were exhausted when we arrived at our destination.

The 10 km from Breadalbane to Hunter River covers some of the most picturesque scenery on PEI. The rolling hills in western Queens and southern Kings Counties are remnants of the Appalachian Mountains and are why PEI qualifies to be included in the International Appalachian Trail.

The farms west of Breadalbane and east of the Loyalist Road in Queens County produce lots of potatoes, but in this area in between, the land is too hilly for potato production. Beef and dairy farms are far more common in this area of the province and the scenery is pastoral and green. We enjoyed the spectacular scenery and it kept our minds off the slow climb.





Around 2:00 pm on Thursday we started a gradual descent into the little town of Hunter River, one of our favourite communities on the Island. The town is located in a valley surrounded by rolling hills. It's the crossroads between the main highway link between Charlottetown and Summerside (Route 1), and also between the highway leading from the Confederation Bridge to Cavendish Beach (Route 13). We often eat at a little restaurant in town (By the River Bakery and Cafe) after one of our hikes – the staff at the restaurant is friendly and the food is excellent.

This time our hike was ending in Hunter River and we were not continuing on to Charlottetown. Instead, Sue and I (and Greg and Debbie) had reservations to stay at the Heritage Classic B&B located near the trail and right beside the Harmony House Theater. The theater had just opened for its summer season and we were hoping to get tickets for the Island Summer Revue, starring Island comedian Patrick Ledwell and his partner in crime Mark Haynes. A mix up on the web site gave us the impression that the show wasn't opening until Friday night, but we got lucky – the first show had been the night before and we were booked in seats right at the front of the theater. They had a new chef too, and he was keen to show off his chops – we ate a scrumptious meal, drank a little ale from one of the new craft breweries and sauntered up to the street to our cosy bed at the Heritage Classic.

After sleeping like babies, we woke for breakfast and spent the 45 minutes chatting with our hosts, Sylvette and Stev Morneau. The Morneau's moved to PEI 12 years ago. Stev was from the Gaspé region of Quebec and Sylvette grew up in Caraquet, in northern NB. They were both Francophones, so moving to an Anglophone community must have had its challenges. Sylvette is a carpenter by trade and her swings, benches and tables are proudly displayed on the front lawn of the B&B. Stev, who looked like biker dude right out of the pages of a Harley Davidson magazine, was a motorcycle mechanic and all round handyman. The couple had made extensive changes to their home to convert it to a B&B – that's

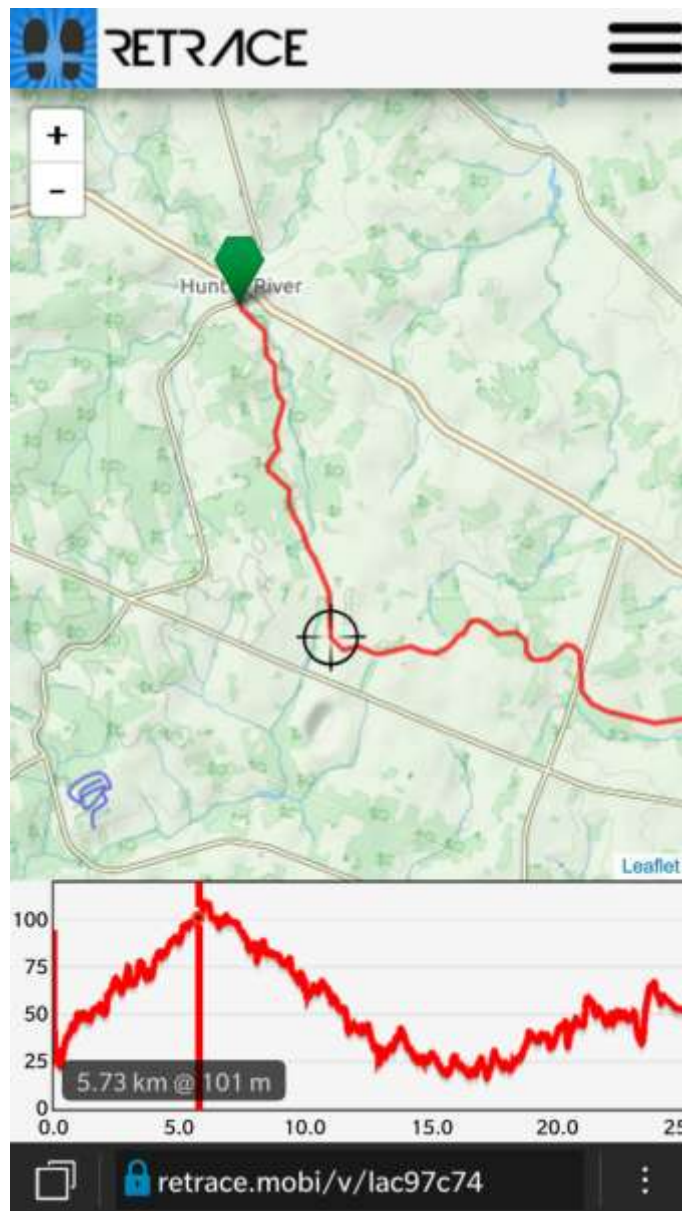
when I realized I had been in the house more than 50 years ago when it was still the United Church manse. My father's best friend had been the United Church pastor in Hunter River. He and his young family had emigrated from Germany, and the Rev. Karl Heller was a German car fanatic. He persuaded my father to carefully consider buying a Volkswagen and then a Mercedes Benz – I'm still driving a VW today. Old habits die hard!

### **Hunter River to Charlottetown (25 km)**

On Friday morning we walked to the trailhead with Debbie and Greg. We had another 25 km to go that day, and our feet were beginning to notice the distance we had covered. I had a small blister on the pad of my right foot, and Sue had sore ankles. Debbie and Greg were in great spirits, but Greg was also beginning to notice his sore feet too. Debbie was carrying an empty cooler – I don't know why.



The first 5 km out of Hunter River went slowly. Again the elevation gain was gradual, but we climbed



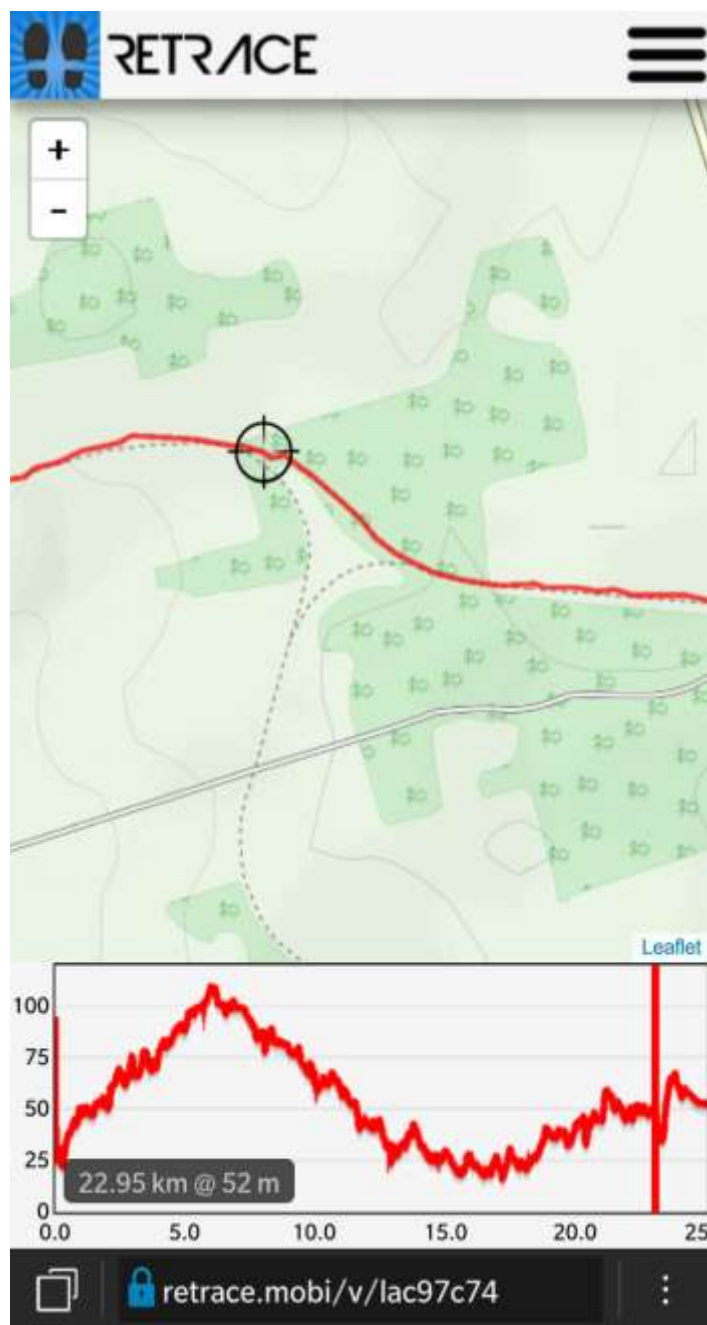
nearly 100 meters in the next hour. After that, we started a slow descent that stretched out over the next 10 km. We were enjoying Debbie and Greg's company, so the time passed quickly.

Greg is a new member on the Island Trails Board, and he has a lot of experience to offer to our organization. He was the Director of Parks with the Government of PEI before Doug Murray assumed this role. He has also had lots of experience shepherding complex funding proposals through the government approval process. Debbie and Greg also share a love of music with Sue and me. We often take in the same concerts and we attended a wonderful show with the Once at Indian River Festival near Kensington just a few weeks ago. The show melded folk melodies and harmonies from the Once with a virtuoso strings performance by Sean Kemp and the Atlantic String Machine. It was an amazing show.

People who hike or bike along the Confederation Trail have noticed that it is far from straight. This is especially true in the section from Hunter River to Charlottetown. The curves are due to the construction techniques used at the time.

The contract to build the railway was awarded in December, 1871. There were no restrictions imposed on the contractors, with the exception that cost should be minimized. As a result, the line was designed to avoid the highest hills and the deepest river valleys. That resulted in there being more than 140 curves in the track between Charlottetown and Summerside alone. The section from North River to Charlottetown was especially bad, with 5 km of track being laid to cover 2.5 km of distance. This section of the track was straightened somewhat in 1904.





The ITA route stays left at Royalty Junction, just north of Charlottetown

Debbie and Greg had other commitments on the weekend, so they left Sue and me in Charlottetown.

We kept walking to Royalty Junction, just north of the city, so we could post more IAT signs. When the railway was built, the mainline went north of Charlottetown. An 8 km spur joined the city proper with the west – east line at Royalty Junction. We posted a “keep left” arrow below the IAT sign at the Junction so hikers will know that the IAT does not go into the city.

On Friday night, Sue and I took a break from the trail. One of our friends kindly drove us into town. We wanted to sleep in our own bed, and eat a normal meal. Of course, a stop along the way meant we could also reconsider what we were carrying in our packs.

The weather was continuing to threaten showers so we kept our raingear in our packs. I decided to forego fashion considerations and left my extra change of clothes at home. I only wish I could have put on spare feet – my blisters were beginning to look really ugly and we still had more than 75 km to go before we finished our hike in Wood Islands on Monday.

### Charlottetown to Mt. Stewart (26.5 km)

Greg and Debbie picked us up on Saturday morning and drove us to the junction of the Confederation Trails and the Brackley Point Road. We look rather pleased with ourselves in this photo, but we were both beginning to feel the grind of the trail on our bodies.



Sue and Bryson consider the more than 75 km yet to go from Charlottetown to Wood Islands, PEI

Heading east from Charlottetown, Sue and I hiked on a portion of the Confederation Trail that we have biked many time before. That gave us the opportunity to take a more careful look at some of the familiar sights along the way.



The first thing we noticed was a little pond just west of the community of York. We stopped at this spot in the spring, not because we wanted to, but because our progress was blocked by a very aggressive Canada goose who was determined to protect its family who were swimming on the little pond. We managed to talk our way past the goose, but

not before he took a couple of runs at us, hissing and squawking at the top of his lungs. Just after we snapped this photo, a beaver swam into view heading across the pond. We wouldn't have seen that if we were biking!



Wild roses along the Confederation Trail near York, PEI

Here's another thing we noticed along the way – lots of wild rose bushes.

In fact, there were so many bushes and shrubs along the way we could have spent hours trying to identify them.



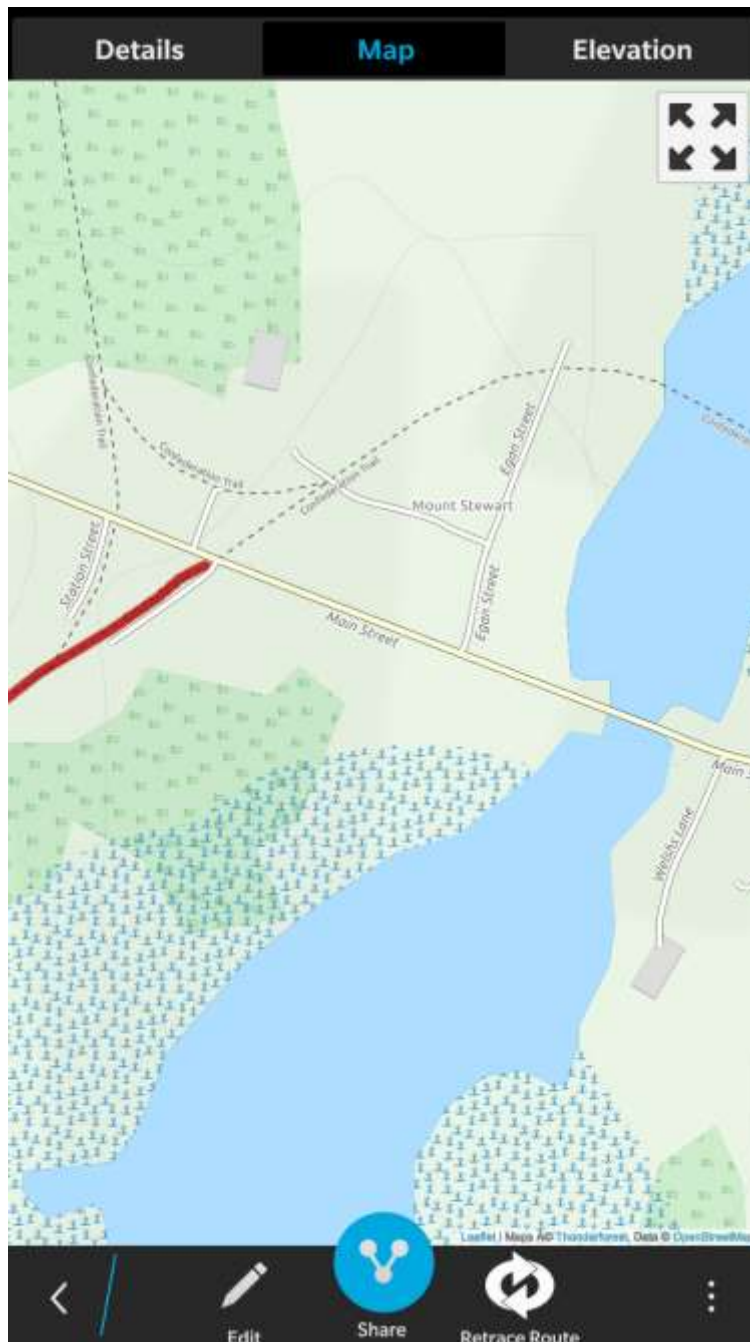
Milkweed is prolific along parts of the Confederation Trail. This patch is located near Suffolk, PEI

Wild blackberry bushes were especially evident along this stretch of trail. Their hard, green berries will be juicy and black by mid-September.

We also encountered lots of milkweed, and fields full of daisies.

The last few kilometers before Mt. Stewart seemed to go especially slowly. We had mentally prepared for a hike of 25 km, but before long we were at 26 km and counting. The wind had died down a little, and this gave the pesky mosquitoes and opportunity to descend on us. I was prepared with lots of DEET, but Sue stubbornly shunned the stuff. Fortunately, the Mt. Stewart Station came into sight and we started to think about our evening and what the community had to offer.





Map of Mt. Stewart, PE. Dotted lines are the Confederation Trail. Red line is a GPS trace of our route into Mt. Stewart from Charlottetown.

We were staying at the Water's Edge B&B, which is located a short distance down what used to be the Cardigan line on the right. The main line continued north of Mt. Stewart towards Morell and St. Peters. We were going to cross the Hillsborough River and head southeast alongside the Mt. Stewart Road.

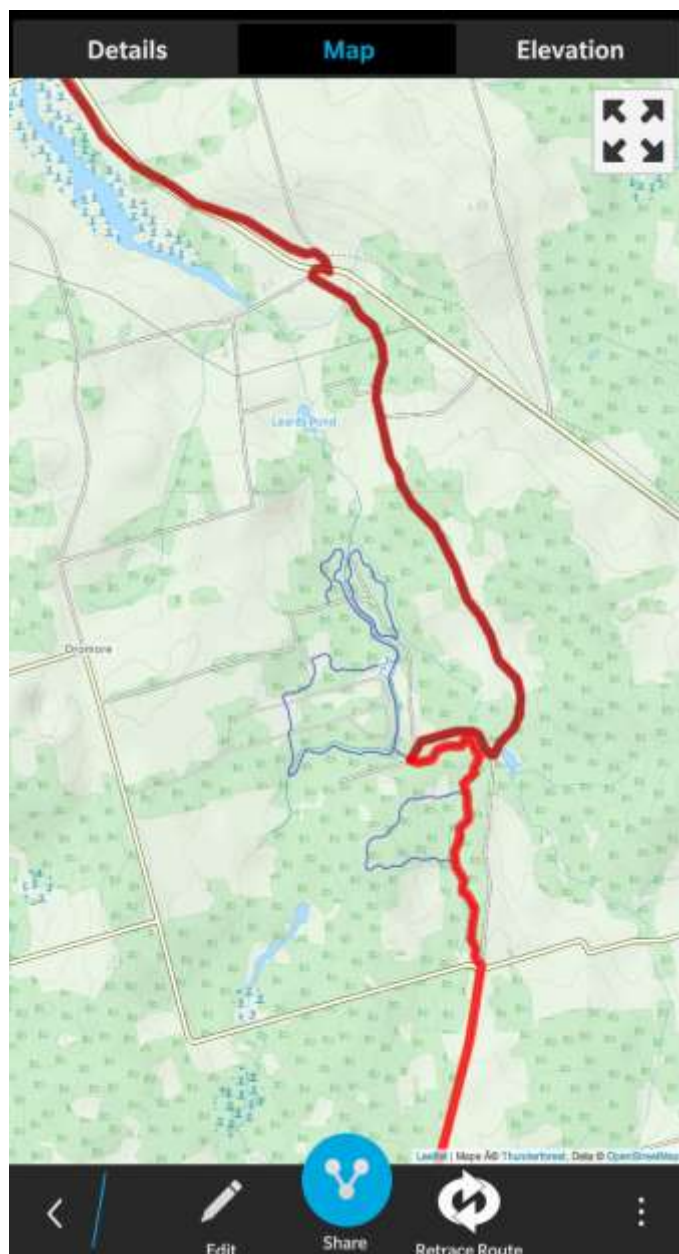
Before we set out, we had a wonderful evening planned in Mt. Stewart. Gordie Sampson was playing at the Trailside Cafe and Inn in and we were lucky enough to get a table with a great view of the stage.

Gordie is a Cape Bretoner, but he's spent the last ten years writing music in Nashville. He has written hits for Carrie Underwood, Keith Urban and Faith Hill, plus many others. He's also won a Grammy, a Juno and several ECMA's.

Gordie put on a great show and the Trailside served us a fine dinner. We dragged ourselves to our B&B too late in the evening, limping with our blisters and sore feet all the way. Never did a bed feel so good!

In the morning, we chatted with Sue Green, owner of the Water's Edge B&B. Sue had hiked portions of the Camino de Santiago in 2014 and again in 2015. She was keen to share her

experiences with us and even had a detailed map of the route for us that included the locations of some of her favorite hostels. We were sad to leave in a rush, but we had a problem. The distance from Mt. Stewart to our next B&B near Newtown Cross was more than 40 km. We needed to seriously consider how to shorten the route. We were about to pay for the short 12 km day we had at the start of our journey!



IAT in PEI – south of Mt. Stewart (IAT in red, Dromore woodland trail in blue)

### Mt. Stewart to Uigg (29 km)

The next part of the IAT gets interesting. After leaving Mt. Stewart and heading south on the old Cardigan rail line for 5 km, the Appalachian Trail leaves the Confederation Trail and heads south.

The route takes hikers through the Dromore Woodland trail, and then down the shoulder of Route 216 for 7 kms to connect with the Stratford to Wood Islands segment of the Confederation Trail in Hermitage. It's easier to visualize on a map than explain in prose.

Cyclists are unlikely to want to tackle the Dromore woodland trail. We felt they would prefer to stay on the High Bridge Road another 2 km to the end of the Dromore trail (Route 216).

After leaving Mt. Stewart, Sue and I hiked 5 km south on the Confederation Trail. Just after the trail crosses the Mt. Stewart Rd. (Rte 22), we turned right off the trail and onto the Old Cardigan Rd (IAT signpost and arrow are posted on left of trail). A few meters later, we turned right on Rte 22, and then immediately turned left onto Joey's Rd. Immediately after that we turned left onto the High Bridge Rd. All these turns happen in less than 1 km and all are marked with

International Appalachian Trail signs.

Before we arrived in Mt. Stewart, I had stopped on the trail and cut a 4 ft. sugar maple sapling to use as a hiking stick. I was carrying the stick when we turned off Joey's Rd. onto the High Bridge Rd. There's a house on that corner that almost sits on the road. Two dogs were quite concerned that we were getting very close to their property and started to bark menacingly. One even came out on the road and started to run towards us. Suddenly it felt very reassuring to be carrying that hiking stick! Fortunately, the dog's owner called him off. The adrenaline dissipated and we continued down the High Bridge Road.

The dog incident was a frightening, but the High Bridge Road proved to be one of our favorite red dirt roads on the hike. The road isn't even marked on the PEI highway map – a first in my experience. There was mist in the fields along the road as it wound its way through blueberry fields and through the dense forest. The pictures below don't really do the scene justice.



No sooner had we left the dogs behind when Sue's phone rang – it was three of our friends who wanted to join us for the rest of the day's hike. Two of them were even going to stay overnight at our B&B and hike with us on the final leg of our journey.





L to R: Sara Deveau, Joan Lambie, Alan MacKenzie, Sherri Gallant, and Sue Norton

We told them to meet us on the Dromore trail which was just ahead on our planned route. We turned right off the High Bridge Rd. onto the Campbell Rd. (10 km from Mt. Stewart). Less than 1 km later, we turned left off the Campbell Rd. onto an unmarked dirt track, and just after that, we turned left again onto the Dromore woodland trail (IAT sign is posted). Our friends met us half way up the trail and we continued south to the trailhead which comes out on Rte 216 (the Avondale Rd).

Walking down a secondary road isn't a lot of fun, even in PEI. The first few kilometers of Rte 216 are dirt, and then the pavement begins. We crossed Rte 5 (ironically called the 48 Rd) and continued about 2 km more to Hermitage (7 km in total on Rte 216). Along the way we passed a paddock of horses grazing in a field next to the road – PEI at its best. In Hermitage, the Confederation Trail crosses Rte 216. The trail is well marked. We turned left onto the trail (20 km from Mt. Stewart) and continued 2 kms to Vernon River. At this point in the day, we were all beginning to feel a little tired. I was getting lots of questions about how much further we had to walk.

In fact, I didn't really know. Before we set out, I knew that the route from Mt. Stewart to our B&B near Newtown Cross was about 40 km. We had cut some of this distance by finding a more direct route to the Dromore Trail down the High Bridge Rd. As a contingency, we asked the friends who had joined us to leave one of their cars in Orwell at the MacPhail Homestead. The Homestead was about ½ km off the trail and about 10 km from our B&B. The trouble was, I didn't know how far it was to Orwell!



Horses grazing beside the Avondale Rd, near Hermitage, PEI

As it turned out, it was about 8 km from Vernon River to Uigg, and .5 km more to the MacPhail Homestead. We turned down the Homestead lane, 29 km after leaving Mt. Stewart.

We were very tired and hungry, and the front pads of both of my feet were sporting big blisters. The final 1/2 km down the Homestead Rd felt a lot longer than it really was. We were all looking forward to our B&B, which turned out to be something special.

The Black Fox Manor Inn is the only B&B located close to Newtown Cross. We wanted to get that far on day 5 to keep our final day's hike to a total distance of no more than 25 km. Unfortunately, the Inn is located about 6 km off the trail and the road runs on a diagonal. On leaving the B&B, we could take a short cut across some fields and miss some of the route, or take the diagonal Rte 211 back to the trail and add 12 km to our hike. Fortunately, we didn't have to deal with any of this. Our friends drove us from Orwell right to the Inn. We landed there at 4:00 pm on Sunday evening.

The Inn was lovely – it's not "the most beautiful home on Prince Edward Island", as claimed on the website, but still very nice. The host, Nicholas, was charming. Nicholas had moved to PEI 8 years ago and had been running the Black Fox Manor Inn since then. We had a three bedroom suite on the third floor of the historic manor. The rooms were cosy and we had booked the full five-course dinner. Yum!

Nicholas served our dinner at 6:00 pm sharp. The carnivores had to choose between scallops, salmon, pork, mussels, beef, ham and chicken. My plant-based choices were a little more constrained but still

more than adequate. We dined and gabbed, and drank wine and beer which our friends had brought in the car. Then we went straight to bed as it had been a very large day.



A charming wooden bridge, not far from Newtown Cross on the Confederation Trail.

### **Iona to Wood Islands (22 km)**

Day six arrived with another pleasant surprise – our friends Debbie Gallant and Ken Miller were going to join us for the final hike. We arranged to meet them on the trail near Iona, about 7 km from the B&B. It was a convenient place for all of us, and it looked like it was about 20 km from our final destination in Wood Islands. Sara, Sherri, Sue and I met Ken and Debbie just south of Iona. Everyone was pumped and our walking pace quickened to close to 6 km/hour.

Our normal pace so far had been about 5 km/hr. That speed dropped to 4 km/hr if stops were factored in. 6 km/hr just wasn't going to work for me. I fell back and occasionally one or more of the others stopped and waited for me.



The gourmet meals of yesterday were soon a distant memory as we hiked our way past the Gairloch Road hiking trail. We stopped briefly there to admire the new composting toilet. The toilet will be much appreciated by hikers and bikers on the Confederation Trail, and also by folks who use the Gairloch Road hiking and



biking trail. This trail is one of the best groomed trails on the Island and is well used by mountain bikers as well as hikers in all seasons of the year.

A little further on, we stopped to eat our submarine sandwiches, purchased earlier from Coopers store in Eldon. The mosquitoes were relentless, so our lunch stop was very brief. Everyone was looking forward to the 4 km spur that would take us to the ferry parking lot in Wood Islands.

It turned out that my distance estimate was wrong again. It was 22 km to Wood Islands, not 20 km. That last 2 km went very slowly as my pace had slowed to about 3 km/hr.



L to R: Sue, Bryson, Sara, Debbie, Ken (Sharri acting silly on the bench)

Of course, none of this mattered in the end. We were happy to have achieved our goal – hiking 150 km on International Appalachian Trail in PEI. Now our thoughts turn to the Camino de Santiago in Spain. Hey, aren't the Pyrenees part of the Appalachian range?

### Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the volunteers who manage Island Trails for the work they do building and maintaining trails on PEI. We would also like to acknowledge the work of the Government of PEI who built and maintains the Confederation Trail. Finally, we would like to thank Cycling PEI and the private donors and citizens who have contributed in so many ways to hiking and cycling in PEI.

A special word of thanks to Dick Anderson and his colleagues for the vision they shared to extend the Appalachian Trail into Canada and beyond. We are celebrating this vision today.

