

Trans Canada Trek Towards UPEI: Alberta

by Rebecca Shorten

We entered Alberta on our fourth day of the trip. We visited Lake Louise and Moraine Lake briefly. As it was the August holiday weekend, we had to try to find a camp site. We couldn't see very much anyway, because the valley at Moraine Lake was blanketed in smoke from the fires in BC. Lake Louise looks just like its famous postcard photos, and I don't think my own photographs are much more original, somehow. The Lake Louise campsite was full, so we went to the glorified gravel parking lot with an outhouse (and not much else), called the "overflow" campsite. That night camping was at a premium and we had many (cranky) close neighbours.

The next day was better. We got up early and headed for the town of Banff, which was only about an hour away. We decided that we would try to get a campsite in Banff, but if none was available, just look around a bit and then head to Calgary. But as luck would have it, we got there early enough to get a nice spot at Tunnel Mountain campground.

We hiked the short distance down the mountain from the campground and into the town of Banff. We had a lovely time wandering around the touristy shops. I got a picture of some elk walking through the river beneath the bridge, and I bought a nice t-shirt because that's just what you do in Banff.

When we got back to the campground (we took the bus), we noticed that ashes from the fires in BC were falling down on us like snowflakes (only not as cold). The fires were as close as 20 km away.



The campground has a nightly "theatre," and the park officer gave a talk about relationships in nature, the interdependence between species. It was really interesting. He also talked about the close relationship people have with the nature in the park, even from halfway around the world.

About 30 years ago, a pesticide called toxifine that had been used on crops had been discontinued. But before that, it was used extensively and some of it evaporated into the atmosphere, snowed down on the glaciers, and the melted runoff flowed into one of Banff's pristine lakes, which now has high levels of the pesticide. It puzzled park staff as to how it got there, and that's their best conclusion. To me, that says that when we think we aren't doing the earth any harm by getting rid of "pests," in the long run we are doing ourselves more harm than good.

The next morning we got up fairly early and packed up and headed for Calgary. We are getting good at setting up and packing up the tent. We put everything else away the night

before so it's ready to go in the morning. (It's also to keep from attracting bears!)

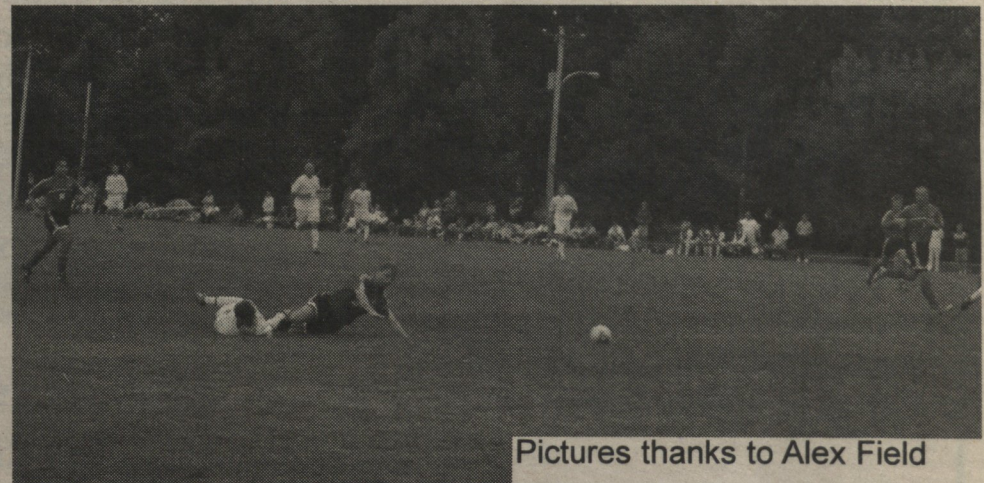
The six lane highway complete with animal overpasses made going through the Rockies seem deceptively easy. As we left the Rockies, the Three Sisters offered a friendly farewell, but unfortunately our view of the mountains behind us was obscured by a thin veil of smoke. Oh well. We must always look forward and not backward.

Calgary was ok. The streets were a little difficult to navigate. Everything starts in the centre and radiates outwards, so you think it would be easy, but you could have a 360 5 Ave N, but you could also have a 360 5 Ave S or SE or NW or whatever. And Calgary's traffic lights are sideways! Crazy! I'd never seen sideways traffic lights before. Such a sheltered life.

After Calgary (nothing was open holiday Monday morning), we drove to Drumheller. The Badlands were interesting, but a little extreme. On the way there was a nice little canyon called Horseshoe Canyon which is a very pretty spot. We could see the layers of earth that time had built up, and each seemed to have its own characteristic colour.

When we finally got to Drumheller (I got us lost for the first time), the world's largest dinosaur was there to greet us with a big, toothy grin. The Royal Tyrrell Museum was great. I didn't really realise how big dinosaurs really were until I'd seen their bones, and then imagined them with flesh. They were huge.

The next day, we found ourselves heading into Saskatchewan.



Pictures thanks to Alex Field

..page [17] September 22 2003..