



CANADIAN OUTRIGGER HALL OF FAME

David Hill



Summary

David Hill, as VCKC President in 1994 and 1995, was a major change agent. The Outrigger Canoe program came into being on his watch and he was on the first dragon boating team, well before the idea of forming a separate program or buying a boat. He had the rare strength of mind to drop out of the VCKC Executive after 4 years, only to be replaced year later by his wife Delia, who served as VP for 3 years. Without the drive and commitment of David & Delia Hill to expanding its range of programs, VCKC would be a very different organization today. [01]

Early Career

Most of the background on David was provided by the "VCKC – 50 Years of Paddling" publication. David was raised in Falkland BC and would graduate from Salmon Arm Senior Secondary High School in 1978. David would graduate with a Bachelors degree in Physical Geography from University of Victoria in 1983. David would complete a 1-year Diploma program in Geographic Information Systems in 1989. David would graduate with a General Certificate in Business Information Systems, Business Administration & Management by way of the Continuing Studies Program from University of Victoria in 2013. David and Norman MacDonnell paddled as white-water slalom paddlers from about 1983 to 1990. David & Delia Hill joined VCKC in 1991, following an introduction to VCKC by Norman MacDonnell. David's main interest was white-water kayaking; he was a former member and President of the University of Victoria Kayaking Club and a Senior White-Water Kayak Instructor with the White-Water Kayaking Association of BC. [02]

Pioneering Achievements

VCKC was formed in 1968, and had been fortunate over the course of 50 years in having Presidents who have held the office for 2-3 years, as this has helped to provide continuity as VCKC has continuously grown more complex. David was VCKC President in 1994 and 1995. The 1st mentioning of Outrigger Canoeing at VCKC is an article by Gord Oliphant in the newsletter of April 1993. Three members (Gord, Don Munroe, and Sheila Schwab) had the pleasure of racing in Outrigger Canoes and were encouraging VCKC to be the 1st club on Vancouver Island to get one. VCKC paddlers went to False Creek Racing Canoe Club in Vancouver and learned about the different Outrigger Canoes including care, maintenance, and rigging, and watched demos on basic paddling techniques. There, they learned there was an Outrigger Canoe available as a "loaner" to any club interested in starting an Outrigger Canoe program and immediately expressed their strong interest. This Outrigger Canoe was called "*The Burrard*" and measured 44' and weighed 600 pounds. At the time, it was on loan to the Whistler Club. Interested VCKC members started sharing paddling articles and videos and began to practice using the old war horses, the Voyageur canoes. Members set up teams, sorted out what nights and times people could paddle, and started to think about how to pay for a club OC6 Outrigger Canoe. David worked with Gord Oliphant to acquire a loaner OC6 Outrigger Canoe for VCKC in 1994. The discussions at Club meetings as to the effect that a "team" paddling discipline would have on the organization were extended and at times contentious, but David was convinced that this was the right direction and he was successful. By May 1994, the loan of the OC6 was official, and the problem was how to get the boat from Whistler down to Victoria. A newsletter article was headed "OUTRIGGER IS COMING". "Your active Outrigger Committee has obtained the Outrigger Canoe "*The Burrard*" and now needs a suitable trailer to transport this 600lb. 44' rocket, and a group to pick it up in exotic Whistler." The next issue describes how David borrowed the UVic rowing club trailer, took it up to Whistler and brought back "*The Burrard*".

His next move was to establish dragon boating at VCKC, entering a team in the 1st dragon boat festival in Victoria) and serving on the board of the Victoria Dragon Boat Society. On the initiative of the Victoria Chinese Community, the 1st dragon boats came to Victoria in 1994. Six boats were brought over from Vancouver to run 250-meter races in the Inner Harbour, as a demonstration sport for the Commonwealth Games. The event was so successful that the races were repeated in 1995. The Vancouver Dragon Boat Festival was held in June, while that in Victoria was in Mid-August. At VCKC, Sheila Allen and David put together a team, the Gorging Dragons, to compete. Sheila was the team's coach and David the stern. His appetite whetted; David requested permission to use VCKC's Voyageur canoes for weekly practices from mid-Spring to August in 1996. To support his case, he arranged that the May 1996 Executive watch a video of dragon boat racing. The team also requested the loan of \$650 to let them enter the 10th annual world

championships in June and this was approved. In 1996, David and the team were tired of using the Voyageur canoes, which, while useful for building up stamina and team work, were not dragon boats and required different steering. David approached Lotus Sports Club in Vancouver to borrow 2 dragon boats for a month before the Victoria Festival to allow VCKC teams to practice. The cost of the loan of these boats was covered by levying a fee on the 3 teams practicing. Among the 1997 Festival teams were 3 made up of breast cancer survivor teams, 1 of which, the Island Breaststrokes, was coached by David.

In November 1995, David was on the Canadian Outrigger Racing Association (CORA) Executive and was proposing a race date for an official CORA race in Victoria. He served on the CORA Executive where he helped to develop that organizations racing and safety guidelines. He lobbied and was successful in getting Island Iron and Wake Up The Gorge (WUTG) races on the CORA race schedule. VCKC joined CORA in 1999. As the Outrigger Canoe program became well established, the program put on the 1st WUTG race in Mar-1999 with 8 mostly local teams attending. The 2nd WUTG race was held Mar-2000 with 28 teams from Vancouver, Kamloops, and Bellingham, as well as VCKC attending. Since then, the WUTG has been a regular fixture on the CORA race calendar held in mid-April. It started out as an Outrigger Canoe (OC6) competition but has grown to include small-boat racing. [03]

After years of organizing and coaching the Outrigger Canoe and Dragon Boating programs, David took a break and began competitive marathon canoe paddling. Under the tutelage of Ron Williams, he competed in the 2007 Edmonton World's Masters Games and the Canadian Marathon Canoe Championships. [04] Until Ron Williams joined VCKC, David had only paddled in a marathon canoe a couple of times and never raced. David's first real marathon race was in Prince George. Ron had told the race organizers that he was bringing up some novice paddlers for the race. The first day was the Tandem marathon race. There was a nasty upstream eddy turn, just past the railway bridge on the Fraser River. A large crowd had gathered to see the "novices" get flipped in the eddy line there. Barry Leslie and David came into the eddy, laid the marathon canoe on edge, gunnel well under water, and swept around the turn buoy in 3 strokes. Everyone on shore was flabbergasted! Not only had they not flipped, they had made the fastest turn and on the most extreme lean anyone had seen. Ron earned credits as being the best marathon coach ever. Ron never told anyone that Barry and David had been whitewater kayakers, so leaning a boat on edge and turning was old hat to them. Barry and David were Tandem partners at the 2007 Master's Games, where they came 4th in the Tandem, and David was 4th in the Solo. They earned a Silver in Tandem canoe at the Canadian Marathon Canoe Championships, and David earned a Bronze for Solo canoe. Since 2007 David has reduced his competitive paddling and is now focused on more recreation canoe paddling. *"I can't think of anything more Canadian than paddling a canoe. I grew up watching Bill Mason's NFB films and always wanted to try canoeing but never had the opportunity. I worked so hard to turn the VCKC from a canoe only club into a multi-sport paddling club because I want other people to have the opportunity I never had growing up"* David Hill.

Coach-Builder Achievements

To launch and land *"The Burrard"*, David, Norman MacDonnell, Cameron Shankland, and Arpad Szatory devised a horizontal ladder or slipway with the rungs made of one-meter lengths of plastic pipe laid out a metre apart and held in place by chains. The OC6 could be lifted down onto the rungs and slid along the slippery pipes into the water. A Vancouver club had used a trolley to move their OC6, and so David and Norman MacDonnell and others designed one with fat, smooth tires that could run down the beach keeping the hull a foot or so above gravel. David credits his early years in outriggering as being important for learning. Only by taking himself and his team out of their comfort zone did VCKC learn what the Outrigger Canoes (OC6s) were capable of and when to set limits for less experienced teams. David and his team were the 1st to huli *"The Burrard"* under the Craigflower Bridge, in the dark, in winter, no one wearing neoprene, and only one person in the boat who had hulled before. And David was in seat 1 when Malcolm Warrington was convinced that the Outrigger Canoe could be run under the Tillicum Bridge at low tide. They avoided the rock in mid-channel, but when the ama got stuck in the hole behind the rock, the momentum of the hull exploded the front ama and the boat hulled. David built a mould for a new ama and the boat was back in use in a couple of weeks.

Exemplary Achievements

David was instrumental in having VCKC host the Canadian Olympic Flatwater team for several years and served as VCKC's Commodore for Sprint/Canoe Canada. The CORA Historical Committee accumulated a wealth of stories / photos during the COVID downtime on individuals / clubs / canoes that made significant contributions to Canadian Outrigger Canoeing. Discovering the complete story of how *"The Burrard"* arrived in Canada in 1986 until it made its final contribution to the Canadian Outrigger Canoeing community in 2006 would not have been possible without accounts provided by David Hill (VCKC), Gord Oliphant (VCKC), Annie Boulding (Comox), Jackie Bell (Comox), Heather Taylor (Nanaimo), Ruth Matson (Nanaimo), VPD Officer Dan O'Donovan (Jericho), Matt Kelly (Predator Performance Designs), and David Chambers (Vernon). [05] David and Susan Logan and Tim Marks (VCKC) provided CORA with a complimentary hard-copy of the *"VCKC – 50 Years of Paddling"* publication which has provided a wealth of information on the early history of Outrigger Canoeing and names of many of the individuals who have made significant and exemplary contributions to the Outrigger Canoeing community.

References

Note	Article	Link
[01]	<i>VCKC – 50 Years of Paddling</i>	https://www.vckc.ca/event-2940125/
[02]	2023 David Hill LinkedIn Bio	https://www.linkedin.com/in/david-hill-34192093/?originalSubdomain=ca
[03]	VCKC 2018 Newsletter	https://www.vckc.ca/resources/Newsletters/2018/2018-05-VCKC-Newsletter.pdf
[04]	2005 Edmonton World Masters Games	https://d3tfdru9q5sbcz.cloudfront.net/2020/09/All-canoe-results-2005.pdf
[05]	"The Burrard" First Outrigger Canoe In Canada	https://www.canadianoutrigger.ca/the-burrard-first-outrigger-canoe-in-canada/