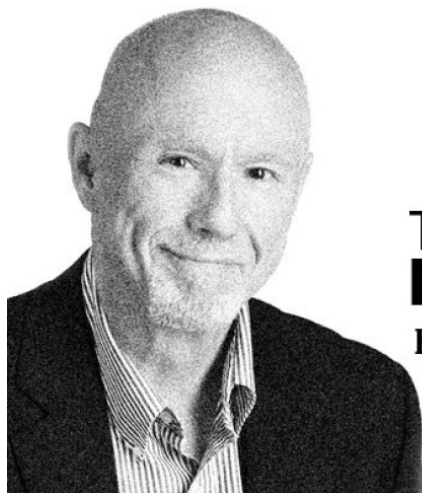


SULLIVAN: Seizing a day to celebrate the North Shore

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The
NORTH SIDE
Paul Sullivan

What did you do to celebrate B.C. Day?

It was a perfect day, so your options were almost infinite. For just a few examples, you could march in the Pride Parade with the PM, appreciate creativity at the Harmony Arts Festival or ride your bike up Cypress Mountain.

The good North Shore Middle Aged Man in Lycra (MAMIL) that I am, I chose to ride my bike up Cypress Mountain. For the record, it took more than an hour to climb the 12 kilometres to the top, so I had lots of time to think.

Frankly, it was more asking questions than coming to conclusions, such as “Why am I voluntarily climbing 1,000 metres in the lowest gear possible and it still feels like going for a walk on a sunny day on Jupiter?” Or the ever-popular, “When will it ever end?”

But end it does. Every time I do this (You’ve done it before? And you’re doing it again? Are you nuts?), I’m uplifted by the glorious sight of the power lines that signal the summit. After that, of course, you turn around and go back down. And that’s the payoff, challenging the 60-kilometres/hour speed limit on your bicycle while staying alert for the tar seam in the road that could bring it all to an abrupt and abrasive conclusion. It takes about nine minutes.

There’s no time to think, just do.

That’s OK, because I did all of my quality thinking on the way up. And here’s what I thought: The August long weekend is the best time to appreciate the endless bounties of beautiful British Columbia (instead of February, say, when we appreciate staying indoors with our families, huddled by the fire).

And if it’s a good time to celebrate B.C., it’s also a great time to appreciate the North Shore. Because, believe it or not, while there’s a Canada Day and a B.C. Day, there’s no North Shore Day. And the North Shore is where we live, isn’t it? Of course, we also dwell in those senior jurisdictions, but North Shore is another word for home.

For some reason, we have chopped it all up into even smaller pieces. **Is there another place in the world that divides itself up into North Vancouver (city) and North Vancouver (district), even when it’s the same place?** I guess there’s some argument for West Vancouver, although it’s a South Surrey-White Rock kind of argument, also known as bragging rights.

Really, from Deep Cove to Lion's Bay, there's only one North Shore. And some time in the future, in the spirit of ecumenism, we should welcome Squamish into the fold (although Squamish doesn't strike me as a joiner).

At least one day a year, we have to put aside our petty differences and bureaucratic boundaries, and celebrate what must be the most fabulous place on the Earth. Such hyperbole is usually reserved for Disneyland, but we have the world's greatest theme park: Mountainland, Forestland, Beachland and Oceanland. On any given day, you can ride your bike, run, hike, golf, play tennis, sunbathe, swim, scuba dive, snowshoe, cross-country ski, sail or go for coffee.

Admittedly, you'd have to start at dawn and the skiing's not so hot in August, but it's all technically possible. And is there anywhere else on Earth where you can get lost in the wilderness 100 metres from the parking lot? Is that not worth celebrating? Yet, to my surprise and chagrin, there is no North Shore Day. You could argue that every day is North Shore Day, but that sounds like a participation medal to me. What we need is a robust, red-blooded day with a parade we can call our own.

OK, if you're with me on this, we need to identify a day. The first weekend in August is arguably the best weekend of the year, but as much as I hate to admit it, we're too late. It's been taken since 1996, thanks to an act of the B.C. Legislature. And Canada, that place that starts in Hope, has the other primetime weekend in July.

I've checked, and amazingly, June is the only month without a stat holiday (March and April share Easter) and the first weekend in June is wide open. If we act quickly, we can make it ours. And the skiing's still pretty good.

Over to you Darrell Mussatto, Richard Walton and Michael Smith. With any luck, I won't be scaling Cypress Mountain again any time soon.

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