

CYCLING WITHOUT AGE-INVERMERE CHAPTER

2019 WRAP-UP

As the end of 2019 has come, we would like to share our success with all of the organizations that helped fund our program. Thanks to everyone's generous support in 2018, we were able to purchase our two initial bikes, make modifications to them to improve their operation, make all necessary repairs and operate our program through the entire 2019 season.

2019 was our first full season and it was a good one. We increased our volunteer base from 22 to 40. Our passenger list now consists of approximately 140 people. We gave 554 passengers a total of 3547 km of rides. Feedback from everyone involved with the program, both passengers and "Pilots" has been heartwarming and gratifying. Public feedback has been very positive, and the program is certainly well known in our town. To see the smiles and hear the conversation from the passengers makes it all worthwhile. Feedback from the various facilities we serve has shown very positive results from their residents too.

One observation we have noticed from the general public is how the younger age groups (kids at the skate park and playgrounds) have taken a keen interest in the program. We routinely see them gathering around the bikes and interacting with the passengers. A lot of "high fives" are exchanged between passengers and youth showing a growing mutual respect. AWESOME TO SEE.

We implemented an online booking system for both passenger and Pilot ride sign up which worked quite well and will improve as we move forward.

In September, Don attended a North American Cycling Without Age Summit in Canmore. Many representatives, both North American and international were there. It was a great exchange of information and ideas and certainly reinforced what a positive initiative this has become worldwide. In 2018, we were the second chapter in BC. This has since grown to 20 and worldwide is now in 47 countries with 2050 chapters.

For 2020 and beyond, we have some exciting initiatives in the works. An opportunity for a sizable federal grant came along and we applied. Our plan, if successful, is to purchase two new Trishaws while keeping one of our original ones. This will give us three bikes which will offer us more flexibility and will spread out use resulting in a longer life of the bikes. We will sell one of the originals to offset purchase costs. The reason we are doing this is that since we purchased our two original bikes, there have been newer improved models developed that have substantially more power. Invermere is quite hilly and the more powerful bikes will be a benefit allowing us to expand our routes and will make it easier for our Pilots. The one bike we will keep is in the midst of a retrofit that will also result in it having increased power assist for the Pilots. (The bike we will sell has been a bit of a lemon from day one). There is quite a bit of interest in our bike from other chapters that are starting up, so disposal shouldn't be an issue.

If we are successful with the federal grant, we will be perusing local funding once again to supplement up to the amount needed for the two new bikes. With the increased demand of the program growth has come increased purchase costs. To date, we have not found out if we will receive the grant, or any portion of it, but will be notified "sometime this winter".

Again, THANK YOU for the generous support that allowed us to start this great program here in Invermere. The results and rewards are many and very widespread throughout the entire community and valley. We look forward to building and improving the program in 2020 and beyond.

Blaine Nester and Don Devlin
Cycling Without Age Coordinators-Invermere.