



My message for First Nations on Vancouver Island.

I was born and raised on Vancouver Island, my children are Tsawout First Nation, my stepchildren Mohawk. I am by nature an altruistic person who has given much of himself to help others, whether that be emotionally, or supportively where I could.

After over 1 million impressions of my posts, and nothing but encouragement and likes and loves, save for a few troll accounts, Restoring Island Rail is the right way to do Transportation on Vancouver Island.

The E&N railway was hand crafted, not by Robert Dunsmuir, but by hard laboring Islanders, people of every stripe. The conditions of its creation and history are painful not only to you, but to everyone on Vancouver Island, in British Columbia, Canada, and world-wide for anyone that has learned of the history. I understand that the comparison seems moot as residential school discoveries are made, but I have children and my children's GG was herself a survivor, so I have some understanding.

The issue is, if we make important decisions while we are emotional, we will make decisions that are rash and not focused on what is truly important, creating a future for our children to live in.

I am an analyst that works with creating strong resilient networks in IT, but those principals apply to any "flow of traffic." On Vancouver Island where our roads feel thin and the means to widen them extremely expensive, it just doesn't make sense to throw away the railway.

Mother Earth is harmed by roads. You know it, I know it, everyone knows it and we are witnessing some very serious events occurring all around the world, and ecologically on the island in terms of biodiversity from road pollutants, a huge concern for the Saanich inlet and many other locations around the island.

There is no area that should think itself insignificant with the current forecasts for the shifting climate, whatever the cause you believe it is. We only have so many controls, and dropping emissions and preservation of our carbon sinks and biodiversity are essential if we are to secure a future for our children and their descendants.

Creating an additional highway system on Vancouver Island, particularly through the Malahat, would cause Inland Highway Damage multiplied by mountains, valleys, streams, rivers, and sensitive habitats.

The freight assessment that came out is literally a glowing golden egg of opportunity island-wide, but for First Nations, it could be transformative.

What the railway started out as is one thing, but what it can become is completely another.

With public and private investment, the opportunities around this railway, on an island that I was born and raised on, in the house that still stands to this day in Langford with the three arches owned by the man my father sold it to, are virtually endless. We are a global island vacation destination!

A railway, once fully realized, can replace the equivalent of 6 lanes of road traffic. No, it won't start out that way, but trust me when I say in my 55th year of life, that anyone that has seen the changes in the last 10 to 100 years will tell you, that progress progresses.

In the future, plans to divert the railway from the areas of concern could be created and built. The land returned to whatever state makes sense in that time for the Nations with concerns. Where flooding is occurring from the railbed, water channels below can be added just like that done for roads since the railbed needs refurbishing anyway.

Where crossings are sketchy, the whole section over time could be raised or dug down into tunnels.

It won't start out that way, but it's already there, and over time it would be improved. It represents 10 to 100 years or more of island preservation.

In the short term, it will give those that shouldn't, couldn't, or can't afford to travel, an estimated 20-40% of the 900,000 people on Vancouver Island, a resilient, comfortable, and accessible system of transportation founded on the Vancouver Island Railway interconnected with transit and other ground modes like cycling.

Trails beside rails would come naturally after that, as they intersect the many other trails we already have, and those could be diverted anywhere that makes sense in terms of First Nations land or district concerns.

Please for the love of God and Mother Earth, will you please support restoring the Island Railway in honour of our ancestors that created it, and to set us on the path toward sustainable living on Vancouver Island. To do otherwise is to ensure more highway destruction and pollution for our waterways.

Warren Skaalrud – Restore Island Rail.