

ITT – Version 4.0

A Brief Race History and an Introduction to the Next Stage in the Evolution of Burlington Runners' Bruce Trail Race

By Bill Schnurr

The brainchild of Cor Potma, the inaugural 'Bruce Trail Survival Run' was contested on August 26, 1989. Two dozen years later the event is moving to a new start/finish venue. Throughout the first 23 years the event had various start locations as it evolved, but always maintained the Kilbride Public School as its finish location. The Classic event distance has varied somewhat over the years but has always been in the 32 to 34 km range.

Versions 1.0 thru 1.2

V1.0 The 1989 race started at the former intersection of Highway 6 and Plains Rd West, first heading northbound on the east gravel shoulder of Highway 6 until it intersected the Bruce Trail half way up Clappison's Cut, and then traversed northeast to Kilbride via the Bruce.

V1.1 In ensuing years, opting to avoid Highway 6, the initial section was rerouted southbound on Plains Rd West to Hillsdale; east to Snake Rd; northeast on Snake to its intersection with the Bruce Trail; then continuing with the original route on to Kilbride.

V1.2 A more participant friendly Hidden Valley Park start location was introduced in subsequent years, with the course then first running Lemonville and Old York Roads to Snake Road; then northeast on Snake to the Bruce Trail and on to Kilbride.

Through Cor's initial tenure the race morphed from a 'Point to Point' to a 'Loop' race, eventually settling in to the Kilbride Public School as a long term start/finish venue.

Version 2.0

The race route was changed to a 'lollipop' loop course extending southward from the Kilbride start/finish, running exclusively on the Bruce Trail and private land; former sections of the Bruce where special permission was granted for the race's use. The stem of the route headed south to Mount Nemo. The course then looped counterclockwise; first southbound along the top of the escarpment; down to No.1 Sideroad; east to Walkers Line and then north on Walkers back to Mt. Nemo before retracing the initial section of the route back to Kilbride.

In the new millennium, Cor semi-retired from race directing, handing his baby over to adoptive race director Geoff Sheppard. Geoff rebranded the race as the 'Iroquoia Trail Test'; named for the Section of the Bruce Trail that extends from Grimsby to Milton, within which the race route exists. For a decade Geoff directed the race with the assistance of Scott Myers and Vince Charbonneau.

Versions 3.0 and 3.1

Geoff's preference was to, as much as possible, keep the race to trails and make the course a more technical. The race route was kept exclusively on the Bruce Trail, but revised to a configuration that combined a lollipop loop with an out and back section. An initial southern 8km loop that included a Bruce Side Trail through the Bronte Creek valley and then back to Kilbride was followed by a northern 24km out and back that

tracked northeast to Crawford Lake and Rattlesnake Conservation Areas; through the Nassagaweya Canyon; to a turnaround at the intersection of Appleby Line and Steeles Avenue; then retracing the route back to Kilbride.

A V3.1 route change occurred as a result of a significant Bruce Trail route improvement/extension through Crawford Lake Conservation Area. To maintain the distance within the Classic distance range, a route alteration was made, opting for a Bruce side trail through the Canyon as opposed to the main trail route.

The next stage in the event's progress saw Cor come out of Race Director retirement to co-direct the ITT with Eric Cameron this time around.

Version 3.2

Eric and Cor's first co-directing initiative was to introduce additional race distances utilizing segments of the established V3.1 race course. This included 8 km, 15 km distances, as well a 50 km Ultramarathon. The shorter distances proved to be quite successful in garnering greater participation numbers by fostering an interest in trail running on the Bruce without having to endure a full dose of the ITT.

Despite the sustained success of the Classic ITT, and the promising future with the shorter race distances, the event was not without its aches and pains. Dealing with less than ideal venue conditions and a number of road crossings that brought with them logistical headaches and ever increasing policing costs, Eric and Cor began to rethink the event.

A race venue relocation to Crawford Lake Conservation Area was agreed upon as the ideal location for the ITT to set down new roots to ensure its future success and potential growth.

The logistical rationale aside, ITT's relocation to Crawford Lake Conservation Area has a real sense of destiny embodied in it. As noted previously, the race was renamed for the Bruce Trail's Iroquoia Section. This section is named for the prehistoric Glacial Lake Iroquoia. Lake Iroquoia was in essence an enlargement of present Lake Ontario that existed at the end of the last ice age, approximately 13,000 years ago. The lake was formed at a time when the receding glacier blocked the St. Lawrence River valley downstream, thereby creating a lake level 30 m (100 ft) above the present level of Lake Ontario. The Niagara Escarpment formed Lake Iroquoia's shoreline through the now Greater Hamilton and Burlington area. The Iroquoia Trail traces the shoreline.

The Iroquoian culture of aboriginal people, also known as the 'People of the Longhouse', populated the region of Lake Iroquoia over 500 years ago. Besides being a location of tremendous natural beauty, Crawford Lake is the site of a reconstructed Prehistoric Iroquoian Village, complete with Longhouses and a palisade based on extensive archaeological studies. The start/finish area will be situated immediately adjacent to the village.

Version 4.0

Still under the direction of Cor and Eric, the latest version of the trail run will take place entirely on Bruce main and side trails together with an interconnecting section of the conservation area's trail network, to facilitate a new multi-loop race format. The Classic distance will carry on along with shorter distance events. There are no road crossings in the V4.0 races. The updated races will offer competitors varying shares of the

extraordinary section of the Bruce Trail between Guelph Line on the west and Appleby Line on the east, including the Nassagaweya Canyon and Rattlesnake Conservation Area, in addition to Crawford Lake. A microcosm of the entire 885 km of the Bruce Trail, this area is blessed with a wonderful blend of woodland single track, wider natural surface and crushed stone trails, meadow areas, as well as very technical rocky sections of trail, with a good measure of undulating terrain throughout. Previous versions of the event have included portions of the new race routes, so experienced ITT competitors will be familiar with much of the route.

The three races offered in V4.0 will include a 7 km short course and an 11.5 km long course alone or in combination to offer 7, 18 and 34 km race distances. The full course shares approximately 6 km of the short course trails. For course details refer to the course maps that follow. Course maps can also be accessed through the Burlington Runners Club website (burlingtonrunners.com) by following the Iroquoia Trail Test tab under the Club Races menu.

Aside from the obvious logistical benefits offered by a more condensed race boundary, the Crawford Lake home offers countless tangible and intangible benefits. The opportunity for race supporters to see the competitors multiple times throughout their run without having to relocate by vehicle is a huge bonus. Additionally, a short walk from the start/finish to nearby Crawford Lake not only provides a serene way to pass the lap time amidst near magical natural beauty, it also affords additional opportunities to see competitors run a section of trail that brushes the lakes shoreline. If that isn't enough, the Iroquoian Village and adjacent Native Species Teaching Gardens provide visitors an opportunity to be entertained and educated in a one of a kind setting.

Race Distances

The **7 km run** (one lap of the short course) provides novice trail runners a great opportunity to foster their development, offering very run-able trails with some hills but without any nasty, technical, rocky sections.

The **18 km run** provides the full menu the new race venue has to offer without the abuse of twice the distance. This race starts with the short course, and after passing through the start/finish area, concludes with one lap of the long course.

The **Classic Distance 34 km run** features three laps of the long course. Long term ITT enthusiasts will not be disappointed with what the new course offers. Given the ever-changing complexion of the race throughout, nobody will be bored on lap 3 while experiencing such a unique combination of beauty and varied topography while enjoying an unprecedented level of race support.

ITT Tutorials

Following on the heels of the 'Sulphur Springs Trail Run', beginning June 2nd guided runs will be offered to initiate club members and prospective participants to the new courses on the first Sunday of June, July and August. Mark your calendar for tutorials on June 2nd, July 7th and August 4th and this year's Race (Test) Day, Saturday August 17th.

Race details are currently posted on the race web site. Watch for future site updates for tutorial arrangements. Club members will be emailed the arrangements when they are made available.