

British Columbia Tracking Association



Almost Spring 2012



District Commander Certificate of Appreciation

BRITISH COLUMBIA TRACKING ASSOCIATION

In recognition of your outstanding contribution to the search for a missing three year old child in Sparwood, British Columbia in September, 2011. The determination and unflagging efforts of the members of your organization during this massive search effort played a key role in bringing comfort to a community in crisis and contributed greatly to the safe return of the child to his family and the eventual capture of the individual involved in his abduction. The dedication your group displayed in the most difficult of circumstances demonstrated the highest standards of professionalism and commitment and serves as an example to all those involved in service to the community.

*Signed at Kelowna, British Columbia
this 15th day of December, 2011*

*Michael Sekela, O.O.M.
Chief Superintendent
District Commander
South East District*



SAR NEW INITIATIVES FUNDING APPROVED FOR 2012!

Good News to shake off those winter blues! Following a formal request from the BCTA in early January, the National SAR Secretariat (NSS) in Ottawa, approved an amendment to the New Initiatives Fund (NIF) Contribution Agreement (CA) allowing the transfer of funding and a one-year extension to the program. This will permit the BCTA to continue promoting tracker training, facilitate courses, and provide members and instructors with some reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses.

BCTA-sponsored GSAR Tracking course announcements for spring, summer and fall 2012 will be posted on the website calendar as soon as they can be confirmed. Towards the end of 2011, some 11 GSAR groups in BC had expressed interest in hosting tracking courses. Host group Training Officers and/or course coordinators are reminded to contact the BCTA Regional Directors as soon as possible in order to initiate planning and set dates for courses at their locations. See the website www.bctracking.org

With the roll-out of our own BCTA Training video and some tweaks to the courses, we look forward to more and better GSAR Tracker training this year!

Volunteers aren't unpaid because they're worthless, volunteers are unpaid because they are priceless!

From the Editor. As you saw on the front page – the Association was recognised by the RCMP with the Certificate of Appreciation for the dedication and high standards displayed under difficult circumstances by the Trackers who worked the Sparwood search and police investigation. Kudos to all of the GSAR Volunteers and Trackers who responded to the task!

In This issue: This issue contains the summary of the BCTA Board meeting held on 29 January. As well, now that funding has been approved for 2012, there is a review of the reimbursements which may be claimed by BCTA Member students, instructors and host GSAR Group course coordinators.

Reminder 2012 Memberships: BCTA membership renewals are due by 1 May 2012.

As some of you may be aware, I snowbird in Arizona during the winter months. Some of my favourite locations for hiking and practising tracking are in the Superstition Mountains and the Saguaro National Parks. But there are also some places not to hike, as southern Arizona is a major back-country highway for human as well as drug smugglers between the Mexican border and the major centres of Tucson and Phoenix.

As Trackers, we have all heard of, and/or read Jack Kearney's book on tracking. Besides the US Border Patrol and Homeland Security, there is a special group that works for US

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Immigration and Customs Enforcement ICE, a group of Native American Trackers known as the “Shadow Wolves”.

In this newsletter, the **Tracker Tales** section features several articles about this group of trackers, that I found very interesting, and I expect you will too! Also, I hope our friends in the RCMP, Canada Border Services, Parks and Conservation, and First Nations also take note – and give us a call to see about training in this “dying art” of Tracking!
www.bctracking.org

BCTA Executive and Directors 2012

President: Win Koch
Vice President: Bart Bjorkman
Secretary: Vacant
A/Treasurer: Alison Rose

Regional Directors:

SE: Jerome Liboiron
SW: Vacant – Contact Peter Wilson
Central: Kelly Carnochan
North: Dwaine Brooke
Vancouver Is.: Peter Wilson

Committee Chairs:

Membership: Peggy Shelley
Training: Bart Bjorkman
Communications: Win Koch
Policy: Dwaine Brooke

Contact information at:

<http://www.bctracking.org>

***“If everyone is in agreement –
then someone is not thinking!”
George Patton***

Board Meeting Summary January 2012

A/Treasurer’s Report: With the transfer of unspent SAR NIF funds to the new fiscal year, the Association can reimburse instructors and students/members some of the cost of attending courses.

There will be new 2012 reimbursement forms available from course coordinators and lead instructors, and on the BCTA website members-only link. Correctly completed claims forms may be collected by course coordinators or lead instructors, or otherwise need to be mailed in within 7 days of completion of the course.

Training Committee: The following courses are announced or in final planning; details are on the BCTA website www.bctracking.org

23-25 March Naramata/Penticton TKA & Advanced

27-29 April Kelowna Train The Trainer/Instructor course

11-13 May Princeton UTS TK1 & SC

25-27 May Salt Spring Island TKA

25-27 May Kelowna Something new: Dog Handlers and Adv. Trackers.

Tracker Training Video is in final editing and should be ready by March. It will serve two purposes – as a promotional tool and as a training video.

Tracker Callout list is being finalized and should be sent to PEP by March. The selected individuals will be notified

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via e-mail to confirm their availability on the list.

Tracker Advisor list of SC and TK2 with additional GSAR TL, SARM and ICS training is going through final vetting. Individuals will be contacted to confirm availability and the list will go to PEP.

Instructor ID cards are being produced and will be mailed out soon.

Membership Renewals are due 1 May 2012. Application forms are available on the BCTA website. We presently have 43 members who have 3-yr memberships to 2013. We also have an additional 23 new members rolled-over to 2012 from the courses in late fall. Welcome to the Association!

Help Wanted

BCTAS Regional Directors

The BC Tracking Association Society requires volunteers to fill the positions of Regional Directors throughout the Province of BC. The duties include: liaising with PEP Regional Managers, BC SARA Regional Directors, GSAR training officers and trackers within the region, providing tracking training materials and advice, facilitating tracking training, assisting other Regional Directors and providing reports, as required. Directors are voting members of the Executive Board of Directors and play a great role in furthering Tracker Training in BC.

For further information or to nominate a suitable volunteer for any of the above positions, please contact President@bctracking.org

All nominees/volunteers must be BCTA members in good standing and be willing to stand for election at the 2012 Annual General Meeting. The nominees/volunteers will need to be approved and appointed by the Board in an Acting capacity. Following the AGM elections, the term will be for a period of up to two years.

2012 Reimbursements

The BC Tracking Association is very grateful to the National Search and Rescue Secretariat (NSS) for the transfer of SAR New Initiatives Fund (NIF) to 2012 and the one-year extension to the project. The agreement is **“To establish, maintain and oversee proven and consistent human tracking training standards in the province of BC with the primary goal to have every certified ground SAR volunteer in BC trained to a minimum of Track Aware.”**

This extension to the agreement will enable the Association to provide certified tracking instructor training and In-House GSAR tracker training in British Columbia at considerably reduced costs to Association members.

What this means to BCTA Members is that they will be subsidized and/or may claim reimbursement for some training costs based on the agreement criteria, as summarized below.

Association members wishing to attend a BCTA sponsored tracking course will have to pre-pay all the associated tuition and fees up-front when they register for a course. However, following the successful completion of the course, they can submit a reimbursement claim to the

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BCTA, which may include the following:

In-House Novice/ Track Aware/ Advanced Up to 10 BCTA sponsored In-House classes could be offered in 2012. BCTA Members will pay a tuition fee of \$50 per In-House course, which is not claimable. Members may be entitled to claim reimbursement for transportation if they live more than 40 km one-way from the training location, up to a maximum of 500 km for one round trip at the rate of 50 cents/km. Car-pooling is encouraged. Only the driver may claim the mileage. Accommodation and meals are at the student's expense and are not reimbursed.

Tracker 1, 2 and Sign Cutters Members may be offered BCTA sponsored advanced Universal Tracking Services (UTS) courses and may be able to claim reimbursement for the UTS tuition of \$175 (Cdn), plus transportation if they live more than 40 km one-way from the training location, up to a maximum of 500 km for one round trip at the rate of 50 cents/km. Accommodation and meals are at the student's expense and are not reimbursed.

Train the Trainers Qualified and selected Members may be offered a BCTA sponsored TTT/ Instructor course in 2012 for up to 15 students. BCTA Members may be able to claim reimbursement for the tuition, plus transportation if they live more than 40 km one-way from the training location, up to a maximum of 500 km round trip at the rate of 50 cents/km. Shared commercial accommodation may be reimbursed up to \$125 per night plus

taxes for two people, or campsite fees, etc. with receipts. Meal packages during the course may also be reimbursed. In return, the BCTA will expect certified instructors to sign a letter of support, hours-in-kind, to volunteer to instruct at In-House courses.

BCTA Certified Instructors assigned by the Training Committee as designated instructors on BCTA sponsored courses may be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses, including travel, meals and accommodation, within prescribed limits. Instructors will volunteer their time for travel and instruction, and will not be compensated for their hours. This is how the Association can offer the lowest possible tuition rates to In-House students.

Course Coordinators of GSAR groups hosting BCTA sponsored courses may be reimbursed for training manuals, hall rentals and other costs associated with organizing and running a course. Details will be provided by the BCTA Regional Director when a sponsored course is requested.

Claims Forms for reimbursement will be available on the BCTA website at: www.bctracking.org - sign in to Members Only and open Files.

How to Host a Course 2012 is now available on the website. Groups wishing to host a tracking course should contact their BCTA Regional Directors or the Training Committee.

"Settling scores is a waste of energy better spent achieving the goals that are the ultimate revenge." Craig Oliver



Tracker Tales

Indian 'Shadow Wolves' stalk smugglers on Arizona reservation

They work for the federal government — and also to protect sacred lands of the Tohono O'odham Nation along the border with Mexico.

November 21, 2011 By Brian Bennett, Los Angeles Times.

Reporting from the Tohono O'odham Nation, — Kevin Carlos hates how the drug runners tramp through the ancient cemeteries and holy places he holds dear.

That peak up there, he says, speeding toward the reservation's border with Mexico. That's where the creator lives. His name is I'toi, the elder brother. He created the tribe out of wet clay after a summer rain. Tribe members still bring him offerings — shell bracelets, beargrass baskets and family photos — and leave them in his cave scooped out of the peak.

But the drug smugglers don't know that. On their way to supply America's drug markets, they use these sacred hilltops as lookouts, water holes as toilets and the desert as a trash can.

So Carlos hunts them.

Carlos is a member of the Shadow Wolves, a team of eight American Indian trackers who stalk drug smugglers through the desolate canyons and arroyos of the Tohono O'odham Nation reservation.

"I like to think I am protecting not only the U.S. but my area as well, my home," he says.

The Shadow Wolves work for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE. To join the special unit, each officer must be at least one-quarter American Indian and belong to a federally recognized tribe.

The trackers spend their days traversing the most isolated parts of the reservation, an 11,000-square-mile parcel of land in southern Arizona that shares a 73-mile border with Mexico. The nation, as it is called here, is the size of Connecticut and populated by more than 13,000 tribe members — slightly more than one per square mile.

There are no street signs and few paved roads. On the state highway, it takes three hours to drive from end to end.

The Shadow Wolves walk ridgelines, ride ATVs and roll high-powered pickups over mounds of shale and through rutted washes. They've trained their eyes to read the desert's tells:

Fresh tire tracks shimmer in sunlight. Old footprints are crisscrossed with insect trails. Marijuana bales leave burlap fibers on mesquite thorns.

When the U.S. Border Patrol clamped down on crossings in an area east of the reservation five years ago, smuggling rings moved their routes to the forbidding 60-mile backcountry corridor that crosses Tohono O'odham lands. Two billion dollars-worth of marijuana, cocaine and heroin has moved through the reservation since then, according to ICE estimates.

The Shadow Wolves use GPS locators, high-powered radios and other modern tools, but it is their tracking skills and their feel for the hidden box canyons, caves and seasonal watering holes that make them formidable counter-narcotics agents.

"It takes patience. These guys think they are out in the middle of nowhere, scot-free," Carlos says. "Then we find them."

The morning sun is inching off the horizon when Carlos starts looking for fresh tracks. His pickup is in low gear, going

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barely 2 mph. He is on a dirt trail that runs along the Mexican border. Anyone moving north had to cross this path. With the window down, he studies the ground.

The truck bears low, horizontal scratch marks from days on end of Carlos driving through thorny brush. Those, he says, are his "Arizona pinstripes."

Carlos stops, gets out and tracks a few scrapes in the sand. ***Smugglers had tied carpet to their shoes to hide their prints***, but Carlos recognizes the marks.

"They came through late yesterday," he says. ***Overnight, a wood rat's tail left a groove across one print.*** They could be far away already.

For \$500, a young man at the southern edge of the tribe's traditional lands in Mexico will strap a 40-pound bale of marijuana on his back and hike for five days through the badlands to Interstate 8 in Arizona.

Bandits sometimes lay in wait to steal the drugs, or to stick up illegal migrants for cash. Some thieves carry Beretta pistols. A few prefer machine guns.

"It's getting worse," says Carlos, as he weaves through the mesquite. That night, a report comes in about a gunfight at the northern edge of the reservation. Five bandits with rifles had ambushed a group of 15 marijuana smugglers on foot.

In Arizona Desert, Indian Trackers vs. Smugglers

By RANDAL C. ARCHIBOLD

Published: March 7, 2007 The New York Times

TOHONO O'ODHAM NATION, Ariz. — A fresh footprint in the dirt, fibers in the mesquite. Harold Thompson reads the signs like a map.



A footprint from smugglers. Rick Scibelli Jr. for The New York Times

They point to drug smugglers, 10 or 11, crossing from Mexico. ***The deep impressions and spacing are a giveaway to the heavy loads on their backs. With no insect tracks or paw prints of nocturnal creatures marking the steps, Mr. Thompson determines the smugglers probably crossed a few hours ago.***

"These guys are not far ahead; we'll get them," said Mr. Thompson, 50, a strapping Navajo who follows the trail like a bloodhound.

At a time when all manner of high technology is arriving to help beef up security at the Mexican border — infrared cameras, sensors, unmanned drones — there is a growing appreciation among the federal authorities for the American Indian art of tracking, honed over generations by ancestors hunting animals.

Mr. Thompson belongs to the Shadow Wolves, a federal law enforcement unit of Indian officers that has operated since the

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early 1970s on this vast Indian nation straddling the Mexican border.

Tracking skills are in such demand that the Departments of State and Defense have arranged for the Shadow Wolves to train border guards in other countries, including some central to the fight against terrorism. Several officers are going to train border police in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, which border Afghanistan, and in several other countries.

In the renewed push to secure the border with Mexico, the curbing of narcotics trafficking often gets less public attention than the capturing of illegal immigrants.

But the 15-member Shadow Wolves unit, part of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, is recruiting members to reach the congressionally authorized complement of 21. And the immigration agency is ***considering forming a sister unit to patrol part of the Canadian border at the Blackfeet reservation in Montana, where concern about drug trafficking is growing.***

"Detecting is one thing, and apprehending is something entirely different," said Rodney Irby, a special agent in Tucson for the immigration agency who helps supervise the Shadow Wolves. "I applaud the technology; it will only make the border more secure. But there are still going to be groups of people who penetrate the most modern technology, and we need a cadre of agents and officers to apprehend them."

The Shadow Wolves have seized nearly 30,000 pounds of illegal drugs since October, putting them on pace to meet or exceed previous annual seizure amounts. They routinely seize some 100,000 pounds of illegal drugs a year, Mr. Irby said.

They home in on drug smugglers, who use less-traveled cattle tracks, old wagon-wheel trails and barely formed footpaths to ferry their loads to roads and highways about 40 miles from the border.

The Tohono land, which is the size of Connecticut and the third-largest reservation in area in the country, has long vexed law enforcement. Scores of people die crossing here every year in the searing, dry heat of summer or the frigid cold of winter. And its 76-mile-long border with Mexico, marked in most places with a three- or four-strand barbed-wire fence that is easy to breach, is a major transshipment point for marijuana, Mexico's largest illicit crop.



Adding to the challenge is that drug smugglers have enlisted tribal members or forced them into cooperation, sometimes stashing their loads in the ramshackle houses dotting the landscape or paying the young to act as guides. Several tribal members live on the Mexican side, and those on the American side have long freely crossed the border, which they usually do through a few informal entry points that drug traffickers, too, have picked up on.

How much the Shadow Wolves disrupt the criminal organizations is debated. Officials said they believed the group's work at least complicated drug smuggling operations — the Shadow Wolves have received death threats over the years — but they said they could not estimate the amount of drugs making it through.

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Marvin Eleando, a Tohono who retired from the unit in 2004, said he believed the Shadow Wolves got just a small fraction of the drugs moving through the Tohono lands. Mr. Eleando estimated it would take about 100 Shadow Wolves to truly foil the smugglers, who employ spotters on mountaintops who watch for officers and then shift routes accordingly.

Still, he said, the unit must keep up the effort because the drugs, and the gun violence often associated with trafficking, imperil tribal members.

"The kids get mixed up in this and then don't want to work anymore," Mr. Eleando said.

The Shadow Wolves track smugglers on the Tohono reservation.

The Shadow Wolves, established with a handful of officers in 1972 as part of what was then the United States Customs Service, were the first federal law enforcement officers allowed on Tohono land.

The federal government agreed to the Tohono O'odham Nation's demand that the officers have American Indian ancestry, a requirement still in place. Members are at least one-quarter Indian, and the current group represents seven tribes, including the Tohono.

While other law enforcement agencies, including the Border Patrol, use tracking, the Shadow Wolves believe that their experience and their Indian ancestry give them an edge, particularly here.

"I speak the language, so when we are dealing with elderly members in particular I can make them more comfortable," said Gary Ortega, a Tohono who has been in the Shadow Wolves for nine years. "They are willing to tell us things they know or see that they may not tell another federal agent or officer."

There is also, of course, the thrill of the hunt.

On a recent day, Mr. Thompson picked up the track around 3 a.m. and, with Mr. Ortega, stayed on it for nearly 12 hours through thorny thickets and wide-open desert. As the terrain grew craggy, Mr. Thompson kept a brisk pace, with Mr. Ortega and other officers leapfrogging ahead to help find the trail.

"Every chase is just a little different," Mr. Ortega said, barely pausing as he followed the prints in the sand.

It grew easier as the sun rose and the smugglers kept bumping into thorny bushes and stopping to rest, leaving their food wrappers behind and coat fibers in the cat-claw brush. By midafternoon, Mr. Ortega and Mr. Thompson were tiring, too. But ***the scent of the men's burlap sacks*** perked up Mr. Ortega, and he quickened his pace, finally catching sight of the smugglers and prompting them to bolt from their resting spot.

Left behind were 10 bales of marijuana, 630 pounds in total, a fairly typical bust, with a street value of more than \$315,000.

With the weight off their backs, the smugglers showed new speed dashing to hiding places and easily outmatched their pursuers. Other Shadow Wolves drove out to pick up the load, finding their colleagues resting on the bales and grinning in satisfaction.

"When we get the dope or the guys," Mr. Thompson said, "that's when it ends."



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Fact Sheet: ICE Shadow Wolves

June 2007 Overview

The Shadow Wolves comprise a U. S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) tactical patrol unit based on the Native American Tohono O'odham Nation in southern Arizona. Shadow Wolf officers are known for their ability to track alien and drug smugglers as they attempt to smuggle their illegal commodities across the border. The unit boasts an esteemed history of tracking passed down from generation to generation. The name "Shadow Wolves" refers to the way the unit hunts, like a wolf pack. When one wolf finds prey, it calls in the rest of the wolf pack.

Despite possession of high-tech equipment, the unit relies mainly on traditional methods of tracking, primarily a technique called "cutting for sign." "Cutting" is searching for and analyzing "sign," which includes any kind of physical evidence (footprints, tire tracks, thread, clothing, etc). Officers may spend hours or days tracking in the field following a "sign" until arrests and seizures are made, or it has been determined that the contraband has been loaded into a vehicle and transported from the area.

Key Facts

The Shadow Wolves methodical approach has enabled them to track and apprehend smugglers in parts of the Southwestern U.S. across arduous desert terrain and rugged mountainous areas ***where tracks left by smugglers may be no more than an overturned pebble or an almost indistinguishable impression in the sand.***

An experienced Shadow Wolf can spot small items snagged on branches, twigs bent or broken, or even a single fiber of cloth or burlap from a sack or bag that could be filled with drugs. They can read faint footprints in the dust and determine when they were made, where they came from and whether or not traffickers are carrying additional weight such as backpacks filled with drugs.

The Shadow Wolves are the Department of Homeland Security's only Native American tracking unit.

The Tohono O'odham Nation, patrolled by the Shadow Wolves, covers 2.8 million acres and is comprised mainly of small, scattered villages.

The Shadow Wolves have traveled to Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia to teach ancient tracking skills to customs officials, border guards, and national police in those countries in order to detect and follow the tracks of people who may be transporting components of weapons of mass destruction.

The Shadow Wolves employ traditional tracking skills combined with modern law enforcement technology to enforce immigration and customs laws on the 76-mile stretch of land the Tohono O'odham Nation shares with Mexico.

The unit was transferred back to ICE from CBP's Border Patrol in October 2006 and is being utilized to enhance ICE investigations and operations on the Tohono O'odham Nation.

Since transferring back to ICE in October 2006, the 15-member unit is responsible for the seizure of over 31,000 pounds of marijuana, over 43 criminal arrests of smugglers and the seizure of 16 vehicles.

Officers estimate in recent years they have seized an average of 60,000 pounds of illegal drugs a year.



Future issues of the BCTA Newsletter will feature more articles on the "Shadow Wolves" of Arizona.