

Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists
of the
Province of Manitoba

Leadership Award

presented to

ERNEST ARMITT

for the

PISEW FALLS “ROTARY” BRIDGE

Ernie Armitt was the Chief Engineer at INCO Ltd. in Thompson, Manitoba, and has been a member of the Rotary Club of Thompson since 1990, serving on the executive since 1992 and as President in 1997-98. Ernie assured the technical feasibility of the project and fired the confidence and enthusiasm of the local executive. He also provided the leadership required to bring a diverse group of volunteers, including miners, firefighters, riggers, helicopter pilots, and business people, to focus and work together to make the project a reality.

Ernie was instrumental in convincing INCO to support the project by donating both engineering resources and materials. Ernie assembled a group of women and men who donated their time and talents to the creation of the unique structure that spans the Grass River below Pisew Falls. Ernie formed an engineering group that included professional engineers, geoscientists, engineers-in-training and technologists. Although INCO was a major supporter, more than 600 hours of the engineering time was volunteered. In particular, Helena Tsoi, P.Eng., was the primary designer of the bridge and contributed significant volunteer hours to make the project a reality. Ernie's vision of the technical feasibility inspired long-time Rotarian, Don Johnson, to take on the role of project coordinator and to enthuse the membership and community in their support of the project.

The Suspension Bridge is built across the Grass River at a point approximately 400 meters downstream from Pisew Falls. Ernie was involved in leading the group through the virgin bush to select the site. The Bridge connects with new hiking trails, 12 km in length, providing access to Kwastichewan Falls, which is Manitoba's highest waterfall. This waterfall was previously accessible only by canoe. The suspension bridge spans 153' and is 4' wide.

It is designed to accommodate foot traffic, however, in the case of an emergency will safely provide access for all terrain vehicles.

Thompson is a community of 15,000 people, some 720 km north of Winnipeg. The primary recreational activities are outdoors, i.e. fishing, camping, snowmobiling etc. Most of these activities require costly equipment to participate in and, therefore, a large segment of the community and visitors to the community are not able to participate. The building of the bridge together with the construction of the trails and picnic areas open up a large area that can be accessed by local families and enhances the region as a tourist destination. The trails lead to prime fishing and camping areas.

In November, 1997 The Rotary Club received the “INNOVATION” award recognizing the PISEW FALLS SUSPENSION bridge project for its vision and the implementation of a new, creative, exceptional and effective idea that will generate economic activity in the Tourism industry.

The Association of Professional Engineers & Geoscientists of Manitoba hereby recognizes the contribution of Ernie Armitt in the leadership role he exemplified in his contribution to the vision, design and construction of the Pisew Falls Suspension Bridge.

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