

The OBLT Road Trip Story of 2016/2017

“What a Ride!”



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The Map: Departures and Destinations

We started the year knowing a few twists and turns were ahead of us. We were building a bus – almost from scratch. All I know is that however long the road, around every corner was an amazing view of dedicated and talented volunteers, passionate community partners, brilliant staff and engaged board members.



We kicked the tires, cranked up the GPS and began our journey. The first plan on the travel itinerary started with a new fundraising adventure. We rolled up our sleeves writing letters, making phone calls and reaching out to the community. We even had a Barn Dance! We met and made so many good friends along the way (every time you see a  in the Road Trip Story, that signifies a new or long-time friend who helped along the way). Those who helped with funds, those who helped with their hands, and those who helped with their spirit.

The road had a few bumps, curves and construction zones, and the speed limit was slow and steady, but we have almost arrived at our destination.

We have travelled the journey learning about removing, painting, carpentry, electronics, batteries, diesel, furnaces and so much more!

We learned about how to take a beautiful piece of art and turn it into a Words On Wheels bus design – Mother Goose and all!



Gas Money

We of course, needed gas money for this big road trip. The brilliant



brainwave of one of our BLT board members ❤️ was to hold a barn dance.

Not just any barn dance, but the “Blue Bus Blues Barn Dance”. With a short time line and plenty of hard work, we had a musical family party at Tiger Lily Farm ❤️.

Community donations, a few wonderful musicians and square dancers ❤️ rolled out a fun time and everyone helped raise our first dollars towards the making of the new


WOW bus.

Next, we asked for sponsorships. Our friends that helped and will have a logo on the bus, came from many different surprising sources ❤️. This was one of the biggest helps of all. With this kind of support, we were ready to hit the road and keep on going!



We also had new friends ❤️ that offered materials and expertise so that when there was a little bump or glitch in our travel plans, they were there to lend a hand.





The First Leg

We were given a pretty snazzy but well-travelled school bus from SD69  and we started to unpack it.

Decals are removed, the flip out stop signs come off and the seats – oh my, the seats!

What does it take to remove 36 double seats that have been bolted into the bowels of the bus for far too long? It takes 6 industrious and determined BLT volunteer bus drivers, coffee, donuts, pizza, more coffee, water and a bit of generous help from the amazing SD69 ‘Bus Barn’ mechanics . The tools were flying, as were the sparks – grinders, chisels, mallets, wrenches the size of baseball bats – all needed to coax (force) the seats out of the bus and into the truck to take to the metal recycling bin at the RDN Transfer Station .

The next corner we turned had us at the paint shop. How do you turn a yellow kid moving machine into an iconic blue outreach early learning and play machine? You get together with the Parksville Young Entrepreneurs  and Terminal Auto Body  make it all happen in one day – rain and all!


The Rest Stop


After the first leg, we pulled into our rest stop, thinking we would only be there a short while, but things don’t always turn out the way they are planned. How do we make this ‘new to us’ bus into a duplicate of the last bus (affectionately known as ‘Ole Bessie’)? This new bus had bigger windows, was taller, had a completely different engine, gas and electronics. Luckily, we were prepared with more donuts and coffee, sharpened pencils and decades of experience with






our talented volunteer bus drivers. Heads were scratched, but ideas were percolating along with the java. What do you really need and what can you do without? At the end of the day, we moved from the rest stop with determination, a plan and the people in the know to make it happen.

The Construction Zone

Rules of the road say that you must follow the construction zone speed limit – which is slow, much slower than you really want to go, but we do what we are told and abide by the law of “hurry up and wait”. We found a new friend named Ed  who taught woodworking in high schools for over 30 years. Let’s just say that our friend Ed is a can-do kind of guy in his 9th decade that still powerlifts wieghts and can take any round peg and fit it into a square hole! He took the furnishings from Ole Bessie and made them fit into the new bus.

But Ed isn’t the only one that is taking this bus through the construction zone. We met a marine mechanic  who took a diesel boat furnace and figured out how to hook it up to this roaming blue machine so that we can be toasty and warm when we are stopped at one of our play locations.

We had a flooring company  who installed the floor. We had an electrician  who advised us about all things electrical – lighting, batteries, shore power, house power. One of our volunteer bus drivers  happens to be a bit of a genius when it comes to making a kid moving machine into a learning and play machine that basically acts a bit like an RV. Wires and back up systems were configured into a thing of beauty (most of which I gave up trying to understand). New lights were installed with LED bulbs. We were rocking this construction zone and slow as we went, we were soon on our way again.




The Final Stretch



At this point of this Road Trip story, we are definitely on the final stretch. Weighed, inspected and insured, our bus is poised to go from prepped to pumped!

Last on the journey is the outer layer, the dressing, the icing on the cake. We called out to local artists to see how they could create a scene that depicted our beautiful natural

environment called Oceanside onto a very large blue moving backdrop and also add a very loved and tried and true bird figure: Mother Goose. Although it was a tall order, three artists came through and did their best. The one that fit the bill will be seen for years to come! Thanks to Peggy Schollenberg  for having the whimsical vision we were looking for.

“Life is what happens when you are busy making other plans.” – John Lennon

It has been a ride. While we were on this OBLT Road Trip, many other wonderful things have been happening. Oceanside Community Makerspace, retiring friends, making new friends – near and far.

It has been a wonderful year with mostly smooth winding roads with the breeze blowing as we drive through time. There are many more roads to travel on, more trips to plan and dream about.

