Wells Gray Rocks! Geology Exposed by Wildfire

The historic 1926 fire in Wells Gray Provincial Park, (also known as the Great Fire of 1926) was a massive blaze that destroyed over 520 square kilometers of forest, primarily along the Clearwater Valley and northward onto the Murtle Plateau. The fire's long-term biological effect was a significant increase in willow growth, which created a plentiful food source that led to a rapid increase in the moose population, and contributed to the establishment of the region as a provincial park in 1939. The fires devastation also helped early geologists mapping in the area in the 1960s and 1970s better observe the valley filling Pleistocene and Holocene volcanic deposits. Pyramid Mountain, a late Fraser Glaciation volcanic landform, was a significant landmark on the fire charred Murtle Plateau. Although the forest has largely regenerated over the past 100 years, the slow regrowth at upper elevations provided unique glimpses into the glacial drainage of the Murtle Plateau even into the 1980s, but only being unmasked now. A story emerging over the past few years, is the importance of these glacial flooding events on the history of the topography of the Murtle Plateau, particularly the evolution of Helmken falls - a key topographic feature in the establishment of Wells Gray as a provincial park.