

Mountain School Tech Tips: A Quick Guide to Using iMapBC: Part 2

In part 1 of this series (see May 2009 KMC Newsletter), I presented some simple instructions for using BC Basemap. One of the other mapping products produced by the Government of BC is iMapBC. iMapBC shares some of the same characteristics as BC Basemap and some of the interface is very similar, but iMapBC includes a huge number of optional layers that can be turned on and off. As with BC Basemap, you'll want to play around to find the options that suit you best, but here is a short (very) tutorial to get you started with iMapBC.

First off, the URL for iMapBC is <http://webmaps.gov.bc.ca/imfx/imf.jsp?site=imapbc>. You'll see that many things about iMapBC look the same as BC Basemap. The same menu across the top, the same pan (the small hand), zoom in/out (magnifying glass) tools at the top on the far left hand side, etc.

Searching for a location is the same as with BC Basemap. Click on <Find Location> on the top toolbar and on the right hand side a list of search options will appear. As with BC Basemap, I find choosing <place name> the most useful option. In this instance I was looking for Hewlett Peak, so I typed Hewlett into the search box. Again, you can choose 1, 10 or 25 km. I chose 10 km. Two Hewletts come up from the search, I, of course, am interested in Hewlett Peak so that is the one I selected.

You'll note that Hewlett Peak comes up in the centre of the screen, but there is some truly awful colouring which makes the map hard to read. This is what iMapBC calls "hillshade colour" with southwest sun exposure. I presume it is meant to give you some idea of the topography, but to me it obscures detail and makes me feel as if I'm in the far south of the USA somewhere in all that desert that they have (better bushwhacking than here, anyway). If you like this, leave it, but if you don't here's how to turn it off. Click on <layers> on the top toolbar and a list of options in blue will appear on the right hand side of the screen. Select <imagery> and you'll see a checkbox (that is checked) labeled "hillshade colour". Click on the checkbox to turn "hillshade colour" off, then click <refresh map>.

The next thing you will probably want is some contours. The map options aren't quite as easy to find on iMapBC as they are on BC Basemap, but, on the plus side, there are a lot more of them. I'll tell you how to find all the different layer options (including the all important contours) and let you play around with what layers work for you.

At the top right hand side of the screen you'll see - written in blue - [add/remove] [change order]. Click on [add/remove]. You'll get a pop-up screen titled "add layers" (iMapBC calls this pop-up window the "layer manager") with a whole list of folders beneath it. There are many, many options here. The key is to find what is actually useful. To get contour intervals, click the <base maps> folder. A drop down menu with checkboxes will appear. The easiest way to get contours is to turn on <base mapping (1:20,000 scale)>. As with BC Basemap, you'll have to

scroll down on the right hand side and click <refresh map> to get the map to reload with contours. You'll note that now, on the right hand side of the screen there are a huge number of options that can be turned on and off. Play around and turn some options on and off and see what you like. Remember you'll always have to hit <refresh map> to get your new map to reload.

You will probably have noticed that when I directed you to turn on <base mapping (1:20,000 scale)> there was also an option to turn on <UTM grid lines (1:1,000)>, a handy feature for GPS users, so you might also want to turn this option on.

Another potentially useful layer is forest cutblocks. You'll find these under the folder <licenses and permits>. Spend some time playing around with all the options available in the "layer manager" to see what options you find useful. You'll note that you can even turn on <crown use tenures>. Panning, zooming and printing are the same as with BC Basemap, so refer to the Part 1 of this series if you've forgotten how to do these things.

There you have it. Lots of options for maps for your next trip into the wilds. Now you have absolutely no excuse for getting lost.