

FOOTPRINTS ON



THE VI TRAIL



www.vi-trail.ca

SUMMER, 2021

CONTENTS

**Update From VITA's President
Focus on a VITA Board Member
Terry's "Zones and Subzones"
Sightings Along the Trail
As Always "Be Safe"**

AN UPDATE FROM VITA'S PRESIDENT, LIZ BICKNELL

As we continue our march to the finish line at Cape Scott, one step at a time, I'm happy to report on a very large step the Vancouver Island Trail Association took recently. VITA's mission is to plan, build and maintain the Vancouver Island Trail (VIT) in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples and stakeholders by linking existing and new trails along the length of Vancouver Island. To that end, it became apparent to the Board that it was time to set up a fund under the **Victoria Foundation** to help with ongoing funding needs. The Victoria Foundation is the 6th largest foundation in Canada and since 1936, has been managing charitable gifts to create permanent, income-earning funds that support hundreds of charities each year. They grant nearly a million dollars a month, and to-date have distributed more than \$269 million to support charities locally and across Canada, so we're in good hands. I'm happy to report that the Vancouver Island Trail Association Fund stands at \$40,000 not counting any accrued interest. Our fund will encourage people to donate further knowing that their funds are protected in perpetuity. The fund will become part of our marketing and

communication efforts, for example VITA will be featured in the Foundation's upcoming magazine *Pulse*, something to look forward to in June.

In addition, I have been working with Vancouver Island politicians and Indigenous Peoples to raise local and Island awareness about the Trail. Not only will you be able to through hike the 800 kms when it's completed but more importantly, there will be many opportunities for incredible day hikes along the Trail. As people searched for wellbeing during the Covid 19 pandemic, more took to outdoor recreation activity - in particular, hiking and biking. Ultimately, as we all focus on health, mental and environmental wellbeing, the conversations around these topics are becoming more prevalent which is a good thing.

Our Trail is a vital part of Vancouver Island's overall wellbeing. Let's keep these conversations and collaborations going. It is always my pleasure to talk about our Trail, and I never shy away from any opportunity to do so.



**WE CONTINUE OUR FOCUS ON ONE OF
VITA'S BOARD MEMBERS:
Vandi Hill**



Vandi joined the Vancouver Island Trail Association Board in 2020 and is looking forward to working with the Board to promote the Vancouver Island Trail to hikers from near and far. She recently moved to Vancouver Island from Toronto and shares with everyone how lucky she feels to be here enjoying the hiking and biking right outside her back door. After years of living and traveling around the world she is looking forward to calling Victoria her home.

Vandi has been working in the Marketing and Communications field for most of her career since completing her MBA. She started her career in the private sector and over the last 15 years has focused on the public sector. From North America across Europe and into Africa she has consulted with clients in all sectors. Her expertise includes developing and implementing communication and marketing strategies, media training, event planning, market research as well as, traditional and digital dialogue.

**Terry's "Zones and Subzones"
THE 'SAANEESH' OF SE VANCOUVER ISLAND**

The distinctive vegetation that results from the Mediterranean climate of SE Vancouver Island lies within the Coastal Douglas Fir Zone (CDF). Years ago, I playfully suggested calling this special vegetation the 'Saaneesh' (from Saanich, obviously?)

The Saaneesh is the product of the very temperate, summer-dry climate that results from the rain-shadow effect in the lee of the Olympic and Vancouver Island Mountains – June-July-August rainfall only 100-200 mm.

The essence of the CDF forest is the lack of hemlock rather than the presence of Douglas-fir since the fir is just as abundant in much (but not all) of the Coastal Western Hemlock Zone (CWH).

Average sites in the CDF - that is with freely drained mineral soils on moderate slopes - are invariably dominated by Douglas-fir with a shrubby understory of salal. On somewhat richer soils/sites, there is often a mix of Douglas-fir and grand fir, a 'true fir' tree species (also referred to as 'balsam') that you won't see in the CWH. Western redcedar often occurs as a sub-canopy beneath the fir, becoming dominant only on poorly drained organic soils of depressions and flats supporting skunk cabbage.

Douglas-Fir Salal – Old Growth



Only in the CDF will you see Garry oak – here in BC at the northern end of its range, which extends far to the south into northern California. Impressive oaks can grow in meadows with particularly fertile, deep soils that are now mostly and at one time almost entirely in agriculture. A rather scrubby form of these woodlands extends onto rocky areas having only thin, discontinuous soils and many exposures of bedrock. The spring aspect of the Garry oak woodlands, especially the meadows, provides an impressive mix of wildflowers, including the creamy white camas and blue death camas. Indeed, many of BC’s threatened and endangered plants are only found in the Saaneesh of Garry oak ecosystems. The open nature of these oak woodlands was very likely maintained in the past by ground fires purposefully set by Indigenous Peoples to promote the growth of Saaneesh food plants, most notably the bulbs of camas.

Garry Oak Meadow and Woodland

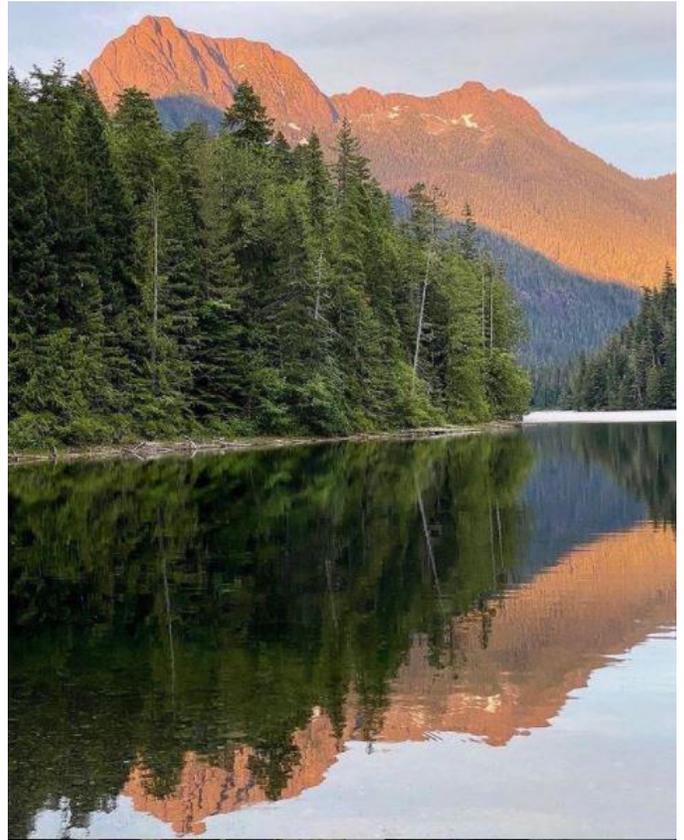


CDF zone ecosystems can be seen along the VI Trail from the Anderson Hill trailhead as far as the Humpback Reservoir, but only in parks and other small remnants of natural vegetation in this predominantly urban landscape. The favorable Mediterranean climate acted as a magnet to early settlement and agriculture, as well as later urban-suburban development, so that now much less than 1% of the CDF remains in a relatively undisturbed natural state. Without active management, even these areas are prone to degradation by invasive species including Scotch broom and introduced blackberries. Consequently, parks such as Beacon Hill and Anderson Hill are the best places to get to know the ‘Saaneesh’.

Terry Lewis

We Close With a Couple of Sights You Will Experience Along the VI Trail

Reflection on Schoen Lake



Stunning Peaks Along White River



As Always - An Important Reminder To "Be Safe"!!:

"VITA reminds and warns all those considering visiting the VI Trail that the Trail is a "Work in Progress" and that certain portions have yet to be completed, and in some instances may not even be accessible. Travel on the planned Trail is completely at the risk of the individual doing so. Please realize that some sections of the VI Trail are through unpopulated areas where users must be self-reliant with respect to maps and the use of directional equipment, and where wild animals may pose a risk to some types of activities."

VITA'S Vision For a Homegrown Adventure:

A signature recreation destination in Canada, the Vancouver Island Trail will span approximately 800 km from Victoria to Cape Scott. Traversing both ancient and working forests, and wild coasts, while joining island communities, the Trail in its entirety will be a 2-3 month-long journey. Not just for long distance hikers, day hikers will enjoy many access points. By 2023, Vancouver Island will have a unique recreational opportunity and a showcase for its communities, including highlighting First Nation's Art, Culture, Language, and History.

We hope you will visit our [website](#)

Interested in our [map](#) of the VI Trail and links to the various sections?

Once again, your feedback and offered input is encouraged and valued –

Please feel free to contact the Editor, Scott Henley, at:

IslandHikerGuy@GMail.Com

Want to Get Involved?

There are two main ways to help VITA complete the VI Trail:

If you wish to become a [Volunteer](#)

If you don't have any spare time, become a "Friend of the VI Trail"

And help us Out with a tax deductible [Donation](#)

As Well – Follow Our VITA Volunteers on [Facebook](#)

And – Follow us on [Instagram](#)

