

North Saanich Currents / Summer 2026

Editorial

WSANEC Peoples call this [time of year](#) **ĆENTĒK̓I** (Sockeye Moon, July), and **ĆENHENEN** (Humpback Salmon Return Moon, August). Summer signifies growth and abundance across cultures as it is the most active period of nature. Here in North Saanich during these long days, there is more time to be outdoors, to gather friends and family, and to enjoy an abundance of fresh produce from our garden and the numerous farm markets, stands, and shops in the district.

In honour of this joyful season, we begin the summer 2026 edition with five articles that emphasize the natural world, starting with the inspiring story of dedicated volunteer citizen scientists working hard to protect the endangered Southern Resident Killer Whales. North Saanich is surrounded by the sea on three sides, and our next article provides a personal and concise introduction on how to explore our local marine world safely. We then follow with three articles that emphasize our local flora – first, an upcoming workshop presented by the North Saanich Fire Department on wildfire resilient gardens; second, a celebration of the beautiful YYJ Pollinator Garden, which aims to restore the culturally significant Garry oak ecosystem; and third, a delicious recipe for herbaceous muffins using North Saanich-grown herbs.

We have been waiting with bated breath for the uncovering of the mystery of the BC Electric Railway (BCER) from [Part 1](#) in the spring 2026 issue. Part 2 takes us north of the YYJ airport to the Patricia Bay area, where we learn about the ghostly traces of rail lines past. Our North Saanich on Foot (NSoF) series takes you on a walk in this same area, and in only 4.2 km, you go

from ocean to countryside, from farmstand to airport views, and walk part of the old BCER railway.

We wrap up on a celebratory note with the announcement of the Saanich Peninsula Hospital & Healthcare Foundation's Spirit Gala on November 14, 2026, in support of our local hospital, and a jovial cartoon by Gerry Karagianis who, with strokes of a pen, artfully tells the story of the bold shenanigans of our local squirrels.

Have a fabulous summer,

Your North Saanich Currents Team

(NSC.community@proton.me)

When Loss leads to Action: Susie's Inspiring Journey

Summer 2026

by Meenal Shrivastava

Among the many wonders of the Salish Sea, the Southern Resident Killer Whales (SRKW) are the most iconic species. With only 73-75 individuals remaining, they are also Canada's most endangered marine mammals.

Culturally, Orcas are profoundly [significant](#) for the First Nations peoples of the Pacific Northwest representing power, strength, family, protection, and transformation. Ecologically, they are a [keystone species](#) vital to the health of the entire ecosystem

For [Susie Washington-Smyth](#), conserving the orca habitat has been both a professional and a personal journey of growth and community building. A long-time resident of Saturna Island, Susie has had a professional career working for industry, governments and agencies to advance environmental concerns. After her partner's demise in 2019, while she was struggling with her sense of direction, a good friend told Susie, "Don't hide, do something. Something that's important to you."

This was also the time when the Trans Mountain Expansion (TMX) project was approved, and Transport Canada had announced [Interim Sanctuary Zones \(ISZs\)](#) to protect the endangered SRKW. The ISZs, now called Vessel Restricted Zones, banned vessels, fishing and all water activity in the [critical habitat of SRKW](#), which included Tumbo Channel. Susie's property is about halfway up Tumbo Channel, and she frequently witnessed Orcas in the channel from this idyllic location.



Sunset on Tumbo Channel

Susie remembers, “I realized that first year that the sanctuary was more than just in Boundary Pass, which is the area from where Harrow Strait comes from Pender to where Georgia Strait starts at the east end of Saturna. And it’s also, of course, the busiest commercial vessel traffic area in Canada and the second busiest on the West Coast after Los Angeles. It was not just a travel corridor for the southern residents, but an important foraging area.”

So, Susie showed up at the Transport Canada public meeting on Saturna and questioned the lack of substance in the measures and their use of only seasonal data to make decisions. Dissatisfied with their response, Susie asked the superintendent of the Gulf Islands National Park to help her organize a workshop involving fishers, tourism interests, First Nations, residents from Saturna and Pender, as well as officials from the federal and regional governments. From there on, it grew into an impressive multilayered collaboration with [Simon Fraser University](#), Saturna Island Marine Research and Education Society ([SIMRES](#)) and the departments of Transport Canada, Fisheries and Oceans, and Parks Canada.

Using her extensive knowledge of adaptive environmental management and community organizing, Susie has been leading a collection of volunteer citizen scientists who help monitor and gather field data. All their sightings are verified by researchers, by photographs, and by other organizations. Their network has now expanded beyond Saturna to include Pender, Galiano, and Maine islands. Susie coordinates the [Southern Gulf Islands Whale Sighting Network](#) (SGIWSN), which also partners with the [WSÁNEĆ Marine Guardians](#), and the [Cetus Straitwatch](#) on Vancouver Island. They are also part of the [Whale Trail](#) which advocates land-based whale watching.



Whale Trail sign on East Point, Saturna Island

Recently, SGIWSN and SIMRES collaborated on [Critical Distance](#), a powerful immersive augmented reality show that brings us face to face with the challenges faced by the orcas. We see and hear what Kiki, a member of the J-Pod, must navigate in her home that is filled with wonders and dangers, where noise is rising and the food supply is dwindling. This exhibition will run until July 6 at the Royal BC Museum.

Susie has been a catalyst in transforming concerned citizens into a dedicated group of volunteers who are collecting robust data, providing baseline, and are now being asked for input on policy and regulation related to conservation efforts in the Salish Sea.

As an additional reward, these efforts have built a supportive community of people who are kind and committed to protecting the wonders of nature in the region. Beyond sustaining collaboration, Susie's has created connections that have led to enduring friendships.

Orcas are referred to as an umbrella species, which means that anything we do to protect them is going to impact, and have cascading effects on, the rest of the ecosystem. Susie's story proves it.



Susie Washington-Smyth in her Orca Hat

Would you like to help the SRKW?

Join: <https://simres.ca/>

Watch: [SIMRES SEATALKS – YouTube](#)

Visit: Critical Distance: [Critical Distance | Royal BC Museum](#)

Paddlers Corner: Enjoying the Waters Around North Saanich

Summer 2026

by Johanna de Leeuw

Summer is a beautiful time to be paddling our pristine waters around North Saanich. With the promise of warmer temperatures in the week ahead, light winds forecast and currents in our favour, let's plan for Russell Island from Moses Point on Wednesday morning. We have the last of an ebb to assist us in the crossing from Moses Point towards Cape Keppel and the paddle along the wilder south side of Salt Spring Island, followed by a flood beginning just before noon to help us on our return journey.

You will need your wheels to follow the path from the road to the launch at the small beach on Moses Point. We will lunch at the little sandy beach on the west end of Russell Island and follow with the always enjoyable hike to historic homestead. If we circumnavigate the island before lunch, the journey there and back is approximately 10 nautical miles. We will need to keep an eye on the ferry into Fulford Harbour when crossing from Isabella Point. Wind, Tide and Current (Sansum Narrows) forecasts are listed below.

How fortunate we are to be living in an area where emails such as these from one of my paddling groups arrive two or three times weekly in my inbox. 'Paddlers Corner' is the first of future articles on paddling in our area where knowledge and ideas of our kayaker's haven and gateway to the Gulf Islands can be shared and explored. The focus in this issue will be geared towards the novice paddler: Getting Started (kayaks, paddles, safety gear); What to wear (our waters are cold so immersion wear recommended); What to know before you get on the water (winds, tides, currents); Where to go (the best spots for scenic sheltered paddles around North Saanich); Close encounters (watch those ferries!); Belonging to a kayaking organisation. Each of these headings could yield an in-depth multi-

page discussion on its own. For now, this issue offers a brief overview of each topic to get the ball rolling.

Getting Started: Kayaks, Paddles, Safety gear

Kayaking responsibly in our waters can seem daunting at first. If you want to do more than play in a plastic Pelican in sheltered waters close to shore (Coles Bay, Chalet Beach Deep Cove, Towner Bay are good options) and go further afield, there is much to consider. But once you are on the water with all you need, you will be rewarded with ocean experiences unique to being in a small, self-propelled craft close to natural wonders.

If you have never kayaked before, the best way to begin is to choose a reputable kayaking company that can supply you with all the gear you need, offer introductory tips, lessons or a guided paddle in a safe environment. One of several such companies on the Saanich Peninsula is [Pacifica Paddle Sports](#) located in Brentwood Bay which has a location right here in North Saanich at Canoe Cove. This is the best way to determine what kind of ocean-going kayak is best for your level. Becoming familiar with the equipment and safety gear you need is the most important step. Transport Canada requires certain safety items for kayaks: PFD, whistle, spray skirt, heaving line, bailer or pump. A reboarding assist such as a paddle float is highly recommended since many novice kayakers may not be able to clamber into their boat in the event of a capsize. Useful information on safety gear can be found at [Mountain Equipment Company](#).

What to wear

It's a brilliant sunny day on the Saanich Peninsula with warm temperatures in the low twenties, water dancing with sparkled diamonds calling out to you. What could be better than to jump into your kayak for a serene paddle along the shores or out to a small island? But wait! If you are thinking of ocean waters, it is important to be aware that though we are located in the

warmest part of Canada, our ocean waters are never warm with average temperatures ranging from [8 -12 degrees](#). Pick up any real estate magazine and you will be invited to purchase property where you can launch your kayak from your backyard or nearby beach. As alluring as this is, for even the most casual local paddle, immersion wear clothing is an essential safety item and will protect you from potential hypothermia should you accidentally capsize.

There are many options for paddling wear, but for a beginner or first-time paddler, and during the warmer months, all you need is a [wetsuit](#) or neoprene layer. Neoprene works by trapping a thin layer of water against your skin and using body heat to create an insulating barrier that slows down heat loss. It has the added benefit of providing extra buoyancy should you find yourself in the water and even protects you from the odd scrape from our rocky shores. There are varieties of options and styles such as sleeveless farmer Jane/John suits, top and bottom separates, or shorty wetsuits that come in varying levels of thickness with 2-3 mm being the standard. A snug fit is important. There is a wide variety of retailers offering types of neoprene that provide different levels of comfort such as [Reed Chillcheater's Aquatherm](#) (compressed and lightweight) and NRS Ultra suits (water shedding inside layer), so it pays to shop around. Paddling boots and gloves are essential comfort additions. Paddling apparel is available from excellent retailers in [Victoria](#) and [Oak Bay](#) area.

What to Know: Winds

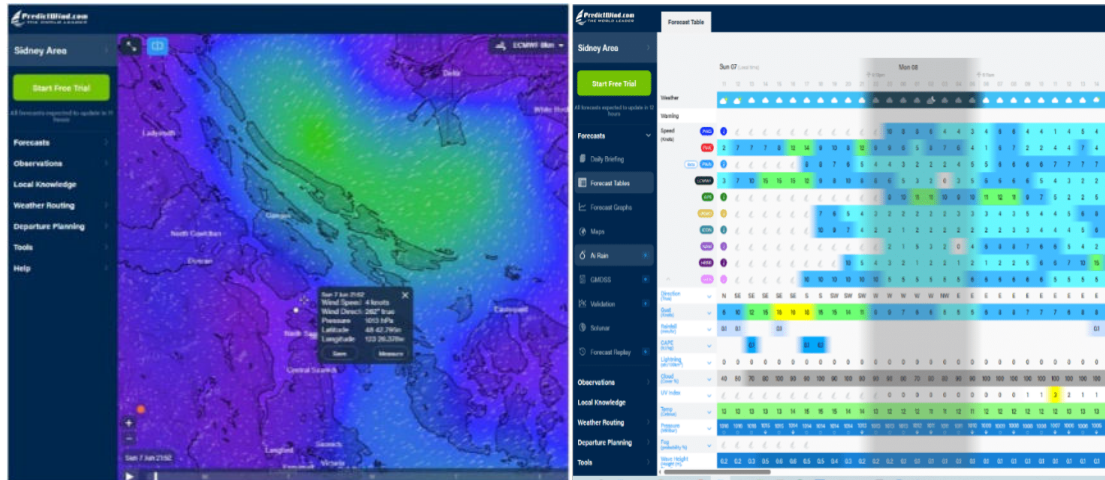
There are many mornings in the summer when we look out over calm waters under a blue, sometimes cloudless sky and think, what could go wrong? Often a day of paddling ends the way it began, calm and beautiful. There are other times when unexpected changes occur especially with wind speeds and direction, resulting in unpleasant, sometimes unsafe conditions. A prepared

paddler is a happy paddler and it is easy to be prepared. Taking the time to consult the many useful wind, tide and currents apps is not only essential, it will set you up safely for that special experience on the water you crave.

The first thing I do when thinking of a paddle, no matter how short or casual, is to look at the winds. A kayak is a beautiful, flexible and comparably lightweight craft but being only human powered, it (and we inside it) are at the mercy of what nature provides. Another way of looking at it is to use nature to our advantage. Instead of fighting the wind, why not choose a day where the wind will either provide some assistance or at least not go against us. In fact, as novice kayakers, we should not consider paddling in winds of more than 10 nautical miles an hour (19 km/h, see Paddle Canada Water Classifications). More than that requires hard work and also learned skills. Winds can also change direction as well as speed during a paddling time window. Wind Apps, while not infallible, have become amazingly accurate and some provide information up to one week ahead. Accuracy of prediction increases closer to the chosen day. It is always best to use several different apps to compare the information and keep in mind, watching the apps over several days will also tell you about the trends. Checking out the trends over time is key to seeing how conditions can change throughout the course of a day or sooner than originally predicted.

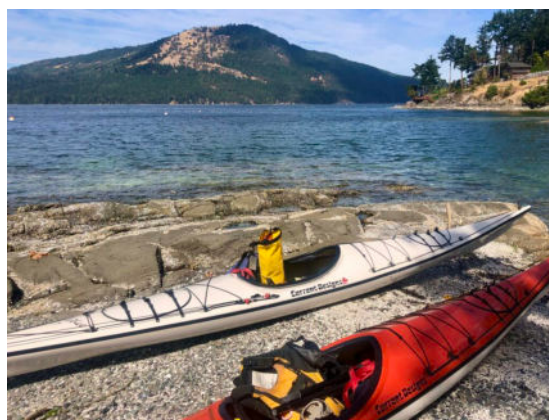
A list of [wind prediction](#) apps can be found on SISKAs (South Island Sea Kayaking Association) general website. They all provide excellent information. Choice of app depends on personal preference as well the information each app provides on the areas where you plan to paddle. While a discussion on wind apps alone could take several pages, here is a very brief introduction. Two popular choices for our area are [Windy](#) and [PredictWind](#) both of whom provide multiple forecast models in graphic display with colour coding as well as in table format (see screenshots below from PredictWind). Taking time to familiarize yourself with these Apps

and the wealth of information they provide is well worth the effort. The key pointers to look for is speed and direction of wind but also gusts (circled in table). The latter is particularly applicable to the Satellite Channel where sudden, unwelcome gusts can descend without warning.



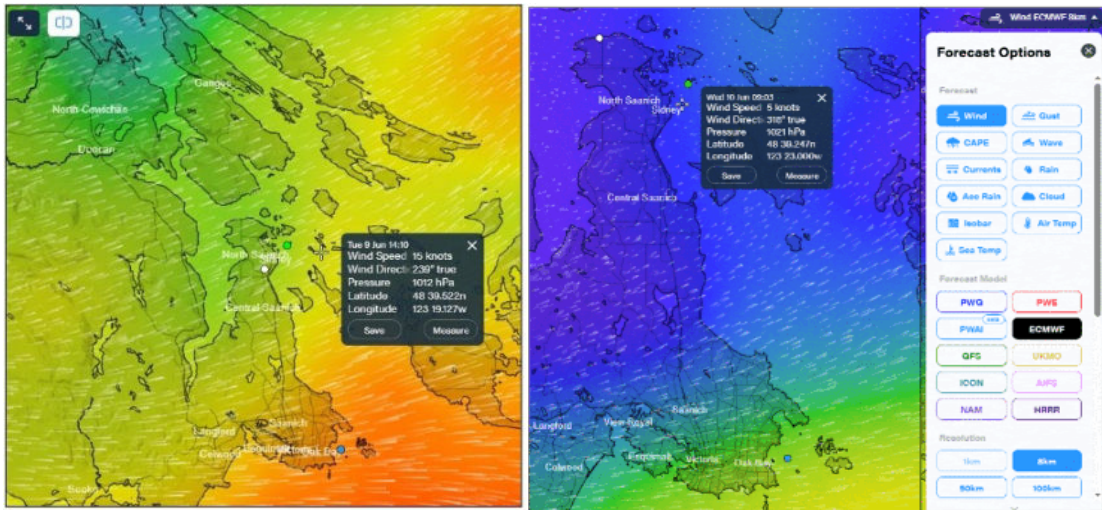
Screen Shots from PredictWind

Today as I write this, it is a beautiful calm morning with relatively little wind in the Satellite Channel. I am tempted to head down to Moses Point and jump into my kayak for a gentle shoreline paddle, perhaps out towards Piers Island and be back for lunch. Even though the current is against me at about 1.5 kt. (that's doable and I can catch the shoreline eddies) I would rather have the current on my side on the way home.



Loaded boats at Moses Point, 2025.

However, I check my apps and see winds in the Sidney/North Saanich area are predicted to be 15 kt from the southwest by noon with potential gusts up to 26 kt. Here is what a challenging paddle home looks like on PredictWind on the day and the change on day after:



Luckily, if I were to start my homeward journey before noon, I would have the current on my side, but that would be small compensation for the strong winds and potential nasty gusts. Alternatively, I could paddle with the current in the opposite direction towards Towner Bay and have the wind at my back on the return journey. But I had better be careful to keep my distance from the rocks so that I don't get blown into them and be prepared for a potential surf landing around the rocky shores of Moses Point.



The rocks around Moses Point on a calm day. Much less benign on a windy, gusty day.

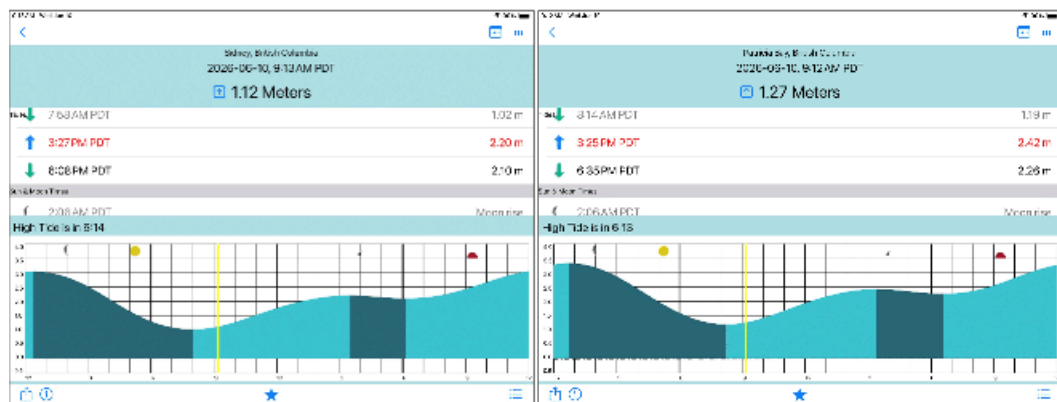
I think I should stay home and write this article.

What to Know: Tides & Currents

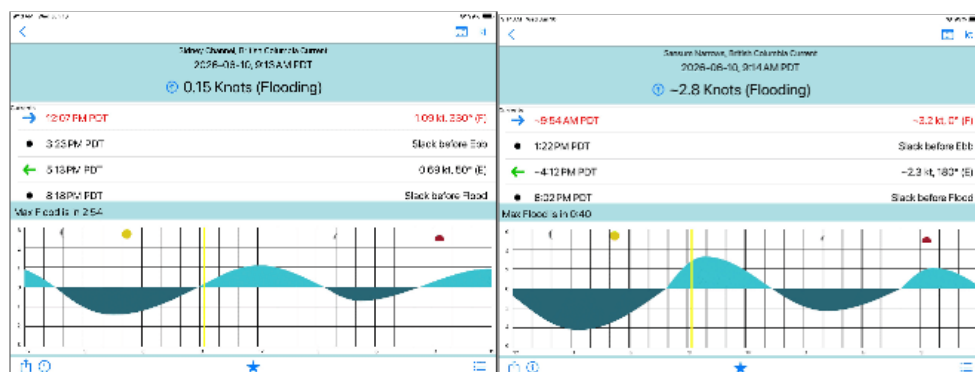
Consulting tides and currents tables is the next essential element in deciding when and where to head out for a paddle. Though both phenomena are linked they are not the same. In a nutshell, tides rise and fall (*insert up and down arrows*) and are caused by the moon's gravity while currents are the directional ebb and flow of flood of water (*insert horizontal directional arrows*). While tides do influence the currents, other complex factors play a part such as geography (water flowing around islands and through narrows), harbours, inlets, river flows and much more. Luckily, we don't need to do in-depth scientific study as we have handy apps that will provide the information we need. The wise kayaker will plan accordingly, soon realizing that paddling against a current requires more effort than the speed of the current indicates (a 3-4 knot current can feel overwhelming to even strong paddlers) while the opposite is true when paddling with the current (your normal speed is increased by sometimes double). Tides and currents are entirely predictable which is great for planning, however winds are not and can scupper the best made plans.

Designing your paddle around currents, even a short one, is not only highly recommended but a guarantee of a more enjoyable, stress-free experience. There is no shortage of websites and apps that provide the information you need. For a local half day or day paddle around the North Saanich/Sidney area, consulting one or two from the options below is sufficient.

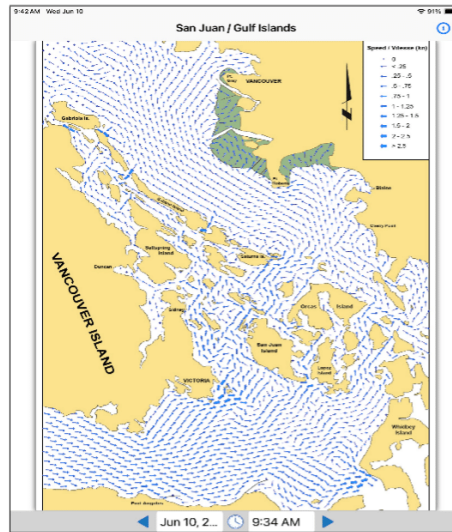
One of the more popular Apps for tides and currents (there are many) is [AyeTides](#) which is designed primarily for mobile devices. It offers tide and current information in easy-to-read visual formats to most locations worldwide and functions offline.



Screen shots of Tides and Currents from AyeTides:



Screen shots of Tides and Currents from AyeTides



Screen shot from PNW Currents App

Another currents resource for the Salish Sea is the [Current Atlas](#) for Juan de Fuca Strait to Strait of Georgia. Using this valuable resource in its original format requires looking up year, date, time and working through tables. Thankfully, a handy workaround has been developed for mobile devices: the [PNW Current Atlas](#) for iPhones and iPad as well as [Android](#) phones and tablets.

[Ocean Connect](#), funded through the [Tula Foundation](#) and maintained by the [Hakai Institute](#), is a locally developed, [free platform](#) featuring a website and mobile App, focused on exploring forecasts and conditions along the coast of British Columbia. The website is exceptionally user friendly, providing valuable information on tides, currents, winds, waves, weather and more in graphic as well as chart form. Predictions are limited to a three-to-four-day range, so I like to use AyeTides and at least two wind apps when planning more than a few days ahead and follow up with Ocean Connect to compare/confirm closer to the day.



Additional links to tides and currents information can be found on [SISKA's general website](#).

Where to Go: First Steps

What about spontaneity you might say? Doesn't all this planning take the fun out of kayaking? Once you become familiar with a few simple Apps and practice using them, it is easy to do a quick check before jumping into that kayak, even at the last minute. One way of looking at it is to take joy in becoming more involved with our environment by familiarizing ourselves with the movement and moods of the waters, winds and weather. As you drive by Patricia Bay or walk along the Sidney waterfront, look at the sea state, at the wave height, the movement of the waves, whether there are whitecaps. Then practice using your Apps and compare what you see with your digital information.



The best way to start your coastal exploration is to decide on a launch spot and do exactly that. A marine chart (number 3441, available from [All Bay Marine](#) in Sidney) is your ideal guide for navigating the coastline.



Another option for a casual paddle that is not an expedition, is the [Saanich/Sidney 'Deck Topper'](#) mapsheet available from Wild Coast Publishing.

The *North Saanich Currents* Team has mapped [27 beach accesses](#) with photos and information but many, with rocky shores and steep or winding stairs, are not ideal for launching kayaks.

Some good locations on the west side of the peninsula for first time paddles are:

- Chalet Beach at the end of Tatlow Road; Launch site information can be found [here](#)
- Briarwood Beach Access; Steps down to a sandy/gravel beach
- Coles Bay; Launch site information can be found [here](#)
- Patricia Bay North; Launch site information can be found [here](#)
- Patricia Bay South; Launch site information can be found [here](#)
- Moses Point; A popular choice despite its difficulties. Launch site information can be found [here](#)

My recommendation for a very first paddle (on a calm day) is Briarwood Beach Access or Cole's Bay. From either location, a pleasant shoreline paddle heading north towards Patricia Bay or south towards Thompson Cove is an ideal start to exploring the delights of the North Saanich coastline. Paddling from Moses Point following the shores of Deep Cove to Coal Point or Towner Bay is equally rewarding. Heading in the opposite direction from Moses Point following Lands End Road can provide interesting real estate viewing! A note of caution: Avoid being tempted to cross the channel to Salt Spring Island. The distance is longer than it looks and should only be attempted by the experienced paddler with training in sea kayaking skills (see [Paddle Canada Sea Kayak Program](#) for progression of skills development).

One last note of caution and of utmost importance, **never paddle alone** and always inform a family member or friend of your plans. In kayak language, we call this a [float plan](#).

Belonging to a Kayaking Organisation

Finally, the benefits of belonging to a kayaking club or organisation cannot be overstated. Victoria is home to several outstanding paddling clubs with the largest and most active purely dedicated to kayaking being the [South Island Sea Kayaking Association](#) (SISKA). Belonging to a club is the most effective way to learn skills from basic to advanced as well as develop awareness of safety on the water – and it has the added advantage of developing a social network of paddlers. SISKA offers over seventy organized group paddles with experienced leaders annually as well as skill building workshops. [Victoria Canoe and Kayak Club](#) located on Gorge Road, also offers skill building opportunities and is a great place to start if you do not own your kayak.

Look forward to seeing you OTW (safely) this summer!



Wildfire Resilient Gardening in North Saanich: Workshop on June 28

Summer 2026

by Bethany Couture

Wildfire resilience is becoming an increasingly important consideration for everyone across British Columbia. On Southern Vancouver Island, our summers are becoming hotter and drier, and the landscapes surrounding our homes can significantly influence how wildfires behave on our properties. The good news is that creating a wildfire-resilient landscape does not mean sacrificing beauty, biodiversity, or ecological benefits. In fact, many of the same practices that support healthy ecosystems can also help reduce wildfire risk.

FREE WORKSHOP

WILDFIRE RESILIENT GARDENING
In North Saanich

Sunday June 28th, 2026
1pm - 4pm

North Saanich Municipal Hall
1620 Mills Rd

Join this **FREE** workshop all about creating more wildfire-resilient gardens that don't sacrifice beauty or biodiversity.

Learn About:

- Select wildfire-resilient plants
- Choose fire-resilient mulches
- Water and soil conservation practices
- Design tips for resilient gardens
- Ongoing resilient maintenance practices

With Bethany Couture, certified horticulturalist and FireSmart landscape professional.

Pre register for this **FREE** event:

NorthSaanichResilientGardening2026.eventbrite.ca

Some of the most effective strategies include selecting appropriate plants and mulches, reducing fuel buildup, maintaining healthy soils, and managing water sustainably. Plants with higher moisture content, native species, deciduous shrubs, and many herbaceous perennials can provide valuable habitat for birds, pollinators and other wildlife while helping create a more fire-resilient landscape. Regular maintenance, such as removing dead branches, dried grasses, fallen leaves, and other accumulated debris, can further reduce potential ignition sources around the home. By combining fire-resilient plant choices, ongoing maintenance strategies, and ecological

gardening practices, homeowners can create landscapes that are both beautiful and better prepared for future wildfire seasons.

Interested in learning more? On June 28, 2026, the [North Saanich Fire Department](#) and Bethany Couture of [Garden Alchemist](#) will be partnering to present an engaging workshop on Wildfire Resilient Gardens. Participants will learn about wildfire behaviour, how to identify vulnerable areas around their homes, and how to make informed decisions about plants, mulches, lawns, hedges, maintenance practices, and garden design. This workshop will provide practical, actionable strategies to help increase resilience, protect your home, and create a thriving, beautiful garden.



Post Tags: [#Environment and Sustainability](#)

The YYJ Pollinator Garden: Native Plants, Pollinators, and Partnerships

Summer 2026

by Jillian Buriak

Editors' note: The names of places and plants are provided in English and **SENĆOTEN**

Woolly sunflower, fireweed (**X**ach't), and native grasses

Next time you are heading towards the airport by car, bike, or foot, take a few minutes to tour the magical [YYJ Pollinator Garden](#) on the Victoria Airport Authority (VAA) lands on Willingdon Road (see pin on [Google Maps](#)), just past the main entrance to YYJ from the Patricia Bay highway. It is well worth visiting all year round, but especially from April to October when it is chock full of native flowers and buzzing bees. The 1200 m² community garden was established in 2022, thanks to the commitment of many [partners](#) including the [WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council](#) and over 30 volunteers who planted 2000 plants and sowed 325,000 seeds over the course of several planting parties.

This garden has been a highly educational, inspiring, and challenging project that is free to visit and explore anytime. The garden also showcases the beauty and resiliency of native plants of southern Vancouver Island, and has exquisite interpretative signage by renowned WSÍ ƛEM artist [Sarah Jim](#).





The goal of the pollinator garden has been the restoration of part of the native Garry Oak and camas (**ÍŁO,EL**) prairie ecosystems of the region called WŚÍ ĶEM, "Place of Clay", in North Saanich. Dominique Joseph, a WŚÁNEĆ woman from a hardworking family of harvesters from WŚÍ ĶEM (Tseycum) and BOĶEĆEN (Pauquachin), generously shared her deep knowledge of the land and culture before agriculture and industrialization of the 19th century converted the area into a monoculture of non-native grass. **ÍŁO,EL**(camas) has been at the very heart of the cultural landscape of the WŚÁNEĆ peoples since time immemorial. She described the one- and four-year cycles that families would follow to oversee the health of these highly productive meadows. Families held precise knowledge to properly time the

cultivation and harvesting of the starchy staples, KŁO,EL (camas), TSÁLIQUW (chocolate lilies) and other herbaceous plants, as well as the low intensity burns in late fall and early spring that fertilized the meadows for the following growing season. The harvests of these meadows were a currency shared with everyone, and were baked and steamed in beachside cooking pits alongside game meat, shellfish, and fish. As Saltwater People, families moved seasonally, from winter villages on the peninsula to the Gulf and San Juan Islands and areas on the Fraser River (ŚNEWIŁ) in the summer. In terms of the restoration, Joseph reminds us that the lands of WŚÍ ĶEM are 35 four-year cycles behind schedule, thus complicating the restoration process.

The concept of the YYJ Pollinator Garden arose in 2019-2020 when a few members of staff came up with the idea to reestablish a Garry oak meadow on airport lands. In 2020, The Victoria Airport Authority decided that it wanted to give back to the community and directed resources towards the project. Allison Waldick, geoscientist, was the Environmental Officer at the Victoria Airport Authority who directed the project. According to Waldick, the project moved forward quickly thanks to the generosity of partners who provided essential in-kind resources of time and materials, including IslandEarth Landscape Design, Pendray Farms, Listco Irrigation Peninsula Landscape Supplies, Peninsula Rock Products, Garden City Tree & Landscape, Graphic FX Signworks, as well as, FED Urban Agriculture, who took on the role of project manager. Grants were also received from a partnership between Vancity and Synergy, as well as Pollinator Partnership Canada, and the Stantec Corporate Program. Plants and expertise were sourced from the native plant nursery, Satinflower Nurseries, located in Central Saanich and Metchosin. Several work parties and two planting events later, the garden was officially opened to the public in 2022. In 2023, the

Victoria Airport Authority won an Airports Council International Environmental Achievement Award for the YYJ Pollinator Garden. As per a VAA press [release](#), “The panel of judges appreciated VAA’s level of energy and commitment to seeing the YYJ Pollinator Garden to completion and particularly noted and complimented VAA’s outreach and cooperation with the local members of the W̱SÁNEĆ First Nations.”

The project has since inspired other organizations in the community and farther afield to choose native plant habitat, including the Shaw Salish Sea Centre in Sidney with their latest exhibit entitled [Wild Allies: Native Plants & Pollinators](#), which is accompanied by a beautiful display of native plants outside the building. This exhibit also features the stunning graphic art of Sarah Jim. The Saskatoon Airport (YXE) was also motivated by the YYJ Pollinator Garden, and in 2025, they opened their own [YXE Pollinator Garden](#). The new NAV CANADA control tower under construction at YYJ will also be surrounded by [native plant-based landscaping](#) of Garry oak meadows.

Would you like to help the YYJ Pollinator Garden? An ecosystem is one of balance, and it is going to take time for that equilibrium to be established. At present, the garden is still surrounded by a sea of non-native grasses, particularly invasive [orchard grass](#) that need to be removed quickly after germinating in the garden. Because the garden is still very new and lacks its full suite of ecological checks and balances, some native plants grow more vigorously than others and threaten to take over; one example has been tufted hairgrass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*), which tried to outgrow its neighbours and required a bit of a haircut and mulching. [Satinflower Nurseries](#) has callouts for volunteers, and if you live nearby in the North Saanich neighbourhood, it would be a great way to meet other native plant aficionados, learn about ƛŁO,EL (camas) meadows and W̱SÁNEĆ culture, and feel proud of the garden every time you pass it to/from the airport.

Native plants, like people, thrive with their companions, friends, and mutuals, and thus a key part of the success of the garden has been the careful planning and integration of ecologically vital plant communities within the garden. For instance, when you visit the garden in the early summer, you will see the woolly sunflower with its companion plants of yarrow (ᑕᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ), sea blush, field chickweed, and Roemer's fescue, as you would in a Garry Oak meadow in Gowland Tod Park, Horth Hill, ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ (Dean Park) or the Sooke Hills. In the wetter area of the pollinator garden (towards the back), brilliant yellow goldenrod flowers in July-August alongside brilliant pink Douglas spirea (ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ) and tufted hairgrass. These native plants, together, provide essential food and habitat for southern Vancouver Island's birds, insects, and mammals, and have an important cultural significance for the ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ peoples. Please visit, take a seat on the bench, and feel the calm energy and strength of this special place.

"Our people lived as part of everything. We were so much a part of nature, we were just like the birds, the animals, the fish. We were like the mountains. Our people lived that way. We knew there was an intelligence, a strength, a power, far beyond ourselves. We knew that everything here didn't just happen by accident. We believed there was a reason for it being here. There was a force, a strength, a power somewhere that was responsible for it. That is the way our people lived. They lived according to that belief, according to that knowledge. The universe lies before you..."

Dave Elliott Sr. (Saltwater People, link [here](#))

Background information and Acknowledgements

Thank you to the following people who donated their time and expertise to helping me better understand the history and motivations of this important

project: Dominique Joseph, Kristen Miskelly, Larissa Bron, Michelle Schlafen-Brown, Allison Waldick.

[Full list of plants](#) in the garden (YYJ Pollinator Garden PDF brochure)

[List](#) of native plants in **SENĆOTEN** (as well as pronunciation)

[Link](#) to learn more about W̱SÁNEĆ place names, *Saltwater Peoples as told by Dave Elliott Sr.*

Email address to sign up to volunteer at the Pollinator Garden: info@satinflower.ca

[Partners](#) who supported the YYJ Pollinator Garden:

[Pollinator Partnership Canada](#)

[Partnership](#) between Vancity and Synergy

[FED](#) Urban Agriculture

[IslandEarth](#)

Listco Irrigation

[Stantec](#)



Post Tags: [#Community and Culture#Environment and Sustainability](#)

Recipe of the Season: Herbaceous Muffins

Summer 2026

by Meenal Shrivastava

I'm new to gardening and aromatic herbs are my favourite things to grow. Nearly three decades away from India has not been distance enough for my palate conditioned by home-cooked foods flavoured with a rich variety of spices. What has become unpalatable is the thought of those spices traveling thousands of kilometres to my home in North Saanich in the era of the

While spices continue to play a crucial role in my cooking, and as [home-remedies](#), I am increasingly supplementing them with aromatic herbs that I can grow in my garden in North Saanich.

Our mild weather allows us to easily grow seasonal herbs such as basil, Chives, cilantro, dill, fennel, lemon verbena, marjoram, mint, parsley, tarragon; as well as hardy perennials such as chamomile, lavender, oregano, rosemary, sage, savory, thyme, and even bayleaf. Additionally, there are a number of [native plants](#) that have been used by the Coast Salish people for millennia for cooking and medicine that are very easy to grow – camas, salal, yarrow, kinnikinnick, Oregon grape, salmonberry, and many more. So there is a lot of room to get creative.

At the beginning of June, I harvested a lot of herbs (and I mean **a lot** of herbs) from the garden.



Some of these herbs went into making savoury muffins that can also be made vegan and/or gluten free. So here is the very easy recipe with vegan and gluten free adaptations.

Ingredients

- 2 cup all purpose flour (or gluten free flour from the local [Millstone Farm Shop](#))^[1]
- 1 egg (or replace with 2 tsp baking powder for vegan muffins)
- 1 cup unsweetened almond/cashew milk (for the vegan version only)
- 2 tbsp apple cider vinegar (for the vegan version only)
- ½ cup olive oil
- 2 tbsp lemon/lime juice
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tsp black pepper or paprika powder
- ¾ cup of finely chopped rosemary/ oregano/summer savory or any fresh herbs of your choice.
- Optional: 2 tbsp crumbled/grated cheese (replace with tbsp nutritional yeast for the vegan version)
- Optional: 2 tsp of lemon zest

^[1] You can add ½ cup corn/almond meal. But if you do, increase the baking powder by ½ tsp.

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 375 °F (190 °C) and lightly grease the muffin pan.
2. In a large bowl, combine the flour and all the dry ingredients^[2].
3. If using an egg, combine with the olive oil and lemon juice. For the vegan version, whisk together the nut milk, oil, lemon juice, and apple cider vinegar.
4. Gently fold in the wet and dry ingredients along with the herbs. Careful not to over mix.
5. Pour batter into prepared pan.
6. Bake for 20-25 minutes, until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.
7. Drizzle with any flavourful oil or have them warm with butter.

^[2] Sift the baking powder into the flour and use a wire whisk to mix well. Lumps of baking powder taste awful.



Post Tags: [#Community and Culture](#)

Thread Through Time: The BCER in North Saanich (PART 2)

Summer 2026

by Edward LeSage

In [Part 1](#) of the [Spring 2026 edition](#) of North Saanich Currents, you explored the British Columbia Electric Railway (BCER) in North Saanich, following the railway's path station by station from the municipality's southern border to "Sidneyway" station on today's airport land. Part 2 of this tale continues the journey to the "Deep Bay" terminus at Deep Cove, with attention to period and present features of the route, ambitious unrealized plans, and two mysteries.

A SECOND VIEW OF THE AIRPORT LANDS RUN, MEADLANDS STATION, PATRICIA BAY

[Part 1](#) concluded by inviting North Saanich flaneurs and flaneuses to view the railway-cum-runway alignment of YYJ's Runway 14/32 from the "Rail History" interpretive sign on the south side of the airport's Flight Path trail. A second perspective is obtained from the north: stand safely on the trail directly across from the intersection of Mills and Wilson roads and look south down the length of the runway. This view will provide you with an extra appreciation of the interurban's route across what is now airport territory.

A pivot toward Wilson Road reveals how the railway, followed later by the adjacent road, continued northward in a gentle descending right-hand curve. Such curves are among the clearest surviving clues of former railway alignments. The curves are defined, in significant part, by engineering requirements of rail vehicle wheelsets. Central Saanich's sinuous Wallace Road demonstrates the best examples of railway curves on the Saanich Line; in North Saanich, similar curves are found on Wilson, Mainwaring, and Tatlow roads.

From the intersection of Mills and Wilson, you can envision “Meadlands” station at Mile 19.4, alongside the BCER tracks and high-voltage transmission lines of the day. BCER purchased the 350-acre Meadlands Farm property with high ambition: the company envisioned port facilities at Patricia Bay and a supporting townsite extending across and beyond the farm. Today, it would extend east beyond the District of North Saanich’s offices. Figure 5 shows the company’s unrealized 1912 “Garden City” plan for the port facility and Meadlands townsite.



Design for a Model Town of Meadlands, Victoria B.C. [UBC Rare Books and Special Collections, Box 33, File 33-B948.]

MYSTERY #1: A PUZZLING FOOTPATH

This never-realized plan leads to the first mystery. A flaneur/flaneuse on Tseycum Road finds the road unexpectedly interrupted by a narrow footpath. By logic, the road should continue unbroken. While paths link roads throughout North Saanich, they are usually of some length and connect two roads; the Tsaycum Road path is only thirty metres long. Something odd is under foot.

Maps and other sources provide a partial explanation. The break and path sit on a cross-section of the old BCER right-of-way where a spur line was built to then Union Bay (now Patricia Bay). The Figure 5 town plan clearly features the spur and a wye, the only elements of the Meadlands town plan built. That spur branched off the Wilson Road main line and ran about a mile across Meadlands Farm land to the Bay; today, the path is the most visible surviving reminder of that built spur.

The spur's most publicized use came early, when Premier McBride and carloads of dignitaries travelled along it to a viewing platform overlooking Patricia Bay after the June 18, 1913 "silver spike" ceremony inaugurating the Saanich Line. For today's curious explorer, that end-of-spur platform – and the envisioned Patricia Bay wharf – would have been roughly at BC Transit stop #102306 on West Saanich Road between Tapping and Munro roads. The



reason a public path straddles the old right-of-way, however, is a mystery itself.

MYSTERY #2: WHY THE WYE?

Figure 6. Above: Ghostly Patricia Bay Spur and Wye (circa. 2019). Below: Spur and wye highlighted in red. [Courtesy of District of North Saanich, GIS Maps, 2026.] Property development obscures the southern curve of the wye which connected to the main run of the railway, but the northern curve and its switch connection to Wilson Road and the south leg of the wye are easily identified. Same said for the spur's run to the shoreline, the Tseycum Road break and pathway, and property lines defining the century-plus old BCER right-of-way.

Figure 5 shows a large triangle of tracks at the heart of the townsite plan: a railway “wye,” an arrangement that allows a train to reverse direction through a three-point shuffle. A wye was unnecessary for BCER's double-ended interurban railcars, but it would have been essential for freight trains pulled by a single locomotive. The most likely explanation for its existence is that the Meadlands/Patricia Bay wye was built in anticipation of cargo-handling port traffic that never materialized, making it a stranded asset. It may still have served limited operational purposes, including hauling logs, roughcut timber, or quantities of firewood harvested north of Patricia Bay. The wye might also have functioned as an overbuilt siding for rail traffic.

At ground level, excepting the Tseycum Road footpath, any evidence of the Patricia Bay spur and wye is invisible. Figure 6, however, uses layered imaging to reveal ghostly traces of the century-old alignment and shows how much of the railway's footprint survives, if only as a rise in the landscape or on maps.

The First World War contributed significantly to the 1924 abandonment of the Saanich Line, but for a moment, in 1919, BCER appeared poised to benefit from the war. The federal government showed an interest in purchasing the Meadlands property to establish a working farm that would aid Great War veterans to take up farming on the Island. This initiative also never saw the light of day

A North Saanich explorer will notice that the transmission lines along Wilson Road, operated by BC Hydro (and inherited from BCER) appear about 250 metres north of the former Meadlands station. The transmission lines appear as if conjured up. In fact, these lines emerge from an underground cable that is buried because the power poles can't be situated any closer to the airport – remember that the south end of Wilson Road is aligned with Runway 14/32.

Prior to the 1939 establishment of Patricia Bay's RCAF airfield, BCER power lines ran in a straight line across the territory within the railway's right-of-way corridor. (See Part 1, Figure 3) Airfield development pushed the lines to Canora Road and northward. Later, and as today, the lines ran buried under an extended (YYJ main) Runway 09/27 emerging adjacent to McDonald Park Road. From this point, the lines journey to their original corridor via Mills Road, with the first-mentioned short subterranean dive, before rejoining their old Wilson Road route. As noted in [Part 1](#), BC Hydro lines are arguably the most visible legacy of the BCER in North Saanich.

GIBSON'S CROSSING AND MALLOWMOT STATIONS

Traveling north on the Wilson Road grade tracks and power lines arrived at John Road and "Gibson's Crossing" station – Mile 19.8. This station was named after another senior BCER employee, Henry Gibson, BCER's traffic superintendent in Victoria.

The North Saanich flaneur/flaneuse can easily access the Gibson's Crossing station location and will note two things about the spot and its environs: the evident rural character, and its proximity to the Tseycum First Nations reserve. Land around Gibson's Crossing was dedicated to farming and other agricultural purposes in the early years of the 20th century. This character remains with farms and ranchettes that are actively in use under protection of provincial Agricultural Land Reserve status. No mention of the Tseycum people is made in published accounts of the BCER Saanich Line, even though the railway ran close to Union Bay 4. Here too is something that begs future inquiry.

"Mallowmot" station (Mile 20.9 named after the late-19th and early-20th century Mallowmot Ranch) was situated at the intersection of today's Wain and Tatlow Roads. Today's Brackenhurst Farm (established in 1930 by the Aylard family) was carved out of the ranch. BC Hydro power lines still cross Brackenhurst Farm, and the Aylard family owners still refer to the old BCER corridor, appropriately, as "the grade."

A fun fact is that the Mallowmot station was later repurposed as a pigsty and chicken coop on Brackenhurst Farm. This wasn't the only post-railway use of the North Saanich stations. The Dominion Brook Park teahouse station's afterlife is noted in [Part 1](#) of this article. The Sidneway and Meadlands stations were integrated into a farmhouse that sat for years off Mills Road near the current site of the North Saanich District property. (See Figure 7) Finally, there's a former North Saanich station that was repurposed as a cottage decades ago and remains in use today. There are likely more examples of these proud structures serving second or third lives along the old Saanich Line.



Sidney and Mallowmot Stations Repurposed [Courtesy of Log Cabin Museum and Archives, F 304 Ph 30.]

Mallowmot station served as an access point for passengers traveling east and west along Wain Road. Wain Road harks back to early European settlement of the area, reportedly first established in the 1860s. Mallowmot was also the BCER station that served South Gulf Island passengers taking inter-island ferries that sailed to and from Swartz Bay. Although some distance from Sidney, the Mallowmot stop was closer than Sidney's V&S station and offered better rail service to Victoria and westside peninsula communities. Local island passengers were among the strongest petitioners for saving the railway when BCER announced plans to abandon the Saanich Line. Important to understand here is that this was before automobile-carrying ferries were in service.

TATLOW ROAD, TATLOW STATION, DEEP BAY STATION, AND DEEP COVE CHALET

Before there was Tatlow Road there was the Tatlow run of the BCER to the north of, then, Tatlow Creek down to Deep Cove. The wide Tatlow Road curve encountered when approaching Horth Hill Regional Park from the south is

one of the previously mentioned railway curves. The road reveals its railway roots in other ways to: it runs close to raising land to the north on an alignment that boasts modest rock cuts. A probable explanation for this slope-hugging and the rock cuts is that the alignment is set on marginal lands either granted or sold by landowners. Property owners wanted to encourage railway building, from which they would benefit, while also preserving workable agricultural land whenever possible.

“Tatlow” station (Mile 22.3) was established the corner of today’s Tatlow and West Saanich roads. Robert Garnett Tatlow was an energetic and celebrated Irish immigrant military man, businessman, and public official. Of note here is his principled rejection of provincial government subsidies to railways. Tatlow resigned twice from governments objecting to subsidies. All the same, the company named the station and creek following his 1910 death in Victoria, at 53 years of age. Tatlow Creek was later renamed Chalet Creek – either way, the creek was stamped by the BCER.

Long-term residents who were raised in the Deep Cove area tell of Tatlow Road as a once narrow and rough road. One veteran resident speaks of family excursions to salvage discarded side-of-road wooden ties left for picking many year after the railway was abandoned. Another describes the Tatlow Road of his youth as narrow track that tunnelled under a thick over-arching tree canopy.



First Interurban Train to Deep Bay [B.C. Archives, Item# F-09264.]

The last station of the North Saanich run, "Deep Bay" (Mile 23.0), was located steps away from Deep Cove's Chalet Beach. The excursions to the end-of-steel beach were so popular that BCER announced plans in May 1914 (ten months after the line was inaugurated) to build the renowned Deep Cove Chalet. It was envisioned as a 23-room hotel and tearoom. The hotel was never built, but the tearoom and accompanying beach amenities were.

Building the Chalet and promoting beach excursions and recreational activities was initially a boon for weekend Saanich Line traffic. Multiunit weekend trains packed with day trippers and groups out of Victoria traveled to Deep Bay's recreational amenities. It is useful to remember that the BCER was a business and it, like other interurban railways on the continent, grappled with reduced weekend passenger numbers and fare revenues. The Chalet and Deep Cove beach recreational opportunities were introduced to bolster rides and revenues.

BCER sold shoreline Deep Cove residential lots to Victoria families and others who traveled to these paradisiacal properties via the interurban railway. The

properties were initially mostly occupied as waterfront cottage retreats which, before Chalet Road, were accessed by hiking from the Deep Bay terminal. With the improvement of local roads and highways overtime, larger and permanent houses have been built on the cottage properties, some of which were, and remain, occupied by subsequent generations of the original cottage families.

END OF OPERATIONS

A severe economic recession beginning in 1913 caused by the collapse of the real estate speculation bubble hit Victoria and the BC Electric Railway hard. This and other factors contributed to the eventual abandonment of the railway. The Great War was one of two of the most significant other factors. It diminished British investment in Canadian enterprises during and following the war, emptied the region of young men and arrested subsequent settlement, and moved industry and internal investment to Central Canada. The second was the burgeoning adoption and availability of automobiles and public investment in roads and other supporting infrastructure.

Schedule adjustments, one-man train operations, and several other strained efforts failed to stop the bleed of Saanich Line red ink, and on October 31, 1924 operations of the Saanich Line were terminated.

Deep Cove Chalet and its shoreline property were quickly sold for \$10,000.00. The railway declared that it was prepared to sell the right-of-way to owners of abutting properties at "a low figure" in recognition that much of that land had been donated by the owners. Elsewhere along the line, what remained unsold of BCER land purchased with enthusiasm in the early 1910s was for the most part sold off with other assets for what the market would permit.

An estimated 2,200 tons of rails were removed and most shipped to serve BCER's widespread and much longer-lived Lower Mainland system. Saanich

municipality acquired 14 miles of right-of-way for road building. A similar transfer did not immediately or wholly occur in North Saanich where no municipal entity existed. Bits of the North Saanich right-of-way corridor land remained in BCER (and successor public crown agency's) hands for some time following. In fact, on the record, this still seems to be the case for a limited number of parcels even if North Saanich paved roads run over top!

YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW

The history of BCER's Saanich Line in North Saanich can be considered in different ways. For example, it can be thought of as a tale of Edwardian Period railway entrepreneur foibles; that is, of men who were driven, and perhaps blinded, by buoyant capital markets and galloping new technologies. It was a time of great ambitions and, undoubtedly, imperial hubris – worth remembering is that the Saanich Line's formative year was 1912, the year that unsinkable *Titanic* went down and the shine of the Edwardian Period dimmed. There is value in understanding the Saanich Line tale to appreciate our history of that time. There is also value in considering the relevance of the hard lessons of that time for today.

Alternatively, the railway can be thought of as a vanguard of modernity and a primary agent of a new regionalism –the “sourdough starter” referenced in Part 1. Interurban railways brought electric power to town and rural residents – this was certainly the case with the BCER – and electricity in businesses and homes ushered in modern life. Interurban railways everywhere in North American unquestionably accelerated the creation of regional communities whose populations would be connected by comfortable rapid transportation. Enduring collective mental images of regional communities were promoted by this ease of movement within regions and accompanying social interaction and commerce. All this is true for Saanich Peninsula, although North Saanich admittedly might be the peninsula

community least integrated into the regional gestalt. It is worth mention that North Saanich “exceptionalism” was evident during the railway’s operational years; weekend service was less frequent beyond Saanichton station (Central Saanich), and more infrequent yet on the line between Meadlands and Deep Bay.

The history of the BCER in North Saanich also should be considered as a layered tale. This article has been written with this firmly in mind. Today’s reality is that almost all evidence of the railway has been built over, removed, or moldered to remnants. And yet, it is undeniable that the physical and mental legacies of BCER’s thread of steel are permanently woven into the fabric of North Saanich. For this reason alone, it is appropriate to acknowledge its existence and contributions.

North Saanich on Foot (NSoF): 4.2 km Loop of Shoreline, Country Roads, Farm Stand, Boats, Planes, and Traces of Old Trains¹

Summer 2026

by Jillian Buriak

This walk has it all. As the title suggests, this loop offers a taste of just about everything that makes North Saanich special. In just over 4 km, you can view many iconic jewels of land and sea including beautiful views of Patricia Bay, two peaceful country roads with a farm stand, watching kids having a great time at the North Saanich Free Ride Park and Jubilee Park, and walking a portion of the airport Flight Path. Bonus features include a short jaunt to the Fickle Fig on Mills Road, and a nearby CRD trail that borders a blueberry field and an active cattle farm, in case you have little ones that want to see cows up close. Moo!



¹ *and bonus coffee & baked goods, cows, & goats!

Click on the [map](#) to go to the interactive Google MyMap of the 4.2-km loop that takes you through classic North Saanich views.

What you need to know:

Route: There are several places you can start as there are three public parking lots along the route that are marked on the map, above. This description of the route starts at the parking lot of Jubilee Park, the playground park at the northwest corner of the airport Flight Path, but since it's a loop, you can start and end wherever you choose. A bus stop and bike rack are located nearby.

Distance: 4.2 km, but some bonus extensions are described below if you would like to add some distance to see cows, and/or visit the Fickle Fig.

Map (link [here](#)) showing the 4.2 km GPS trace of the path on a Google MyMap, with photos. The map can be viewed on your phone and enables you to check your position relative to the route as you walk. No special software is required.

Accessibility: Accessibility of this route is generally good. The YYJ airport loop, called the Flight Path, is paved and separated from the road, and the gravel trail along Patricia Bay is wide and packed flat. The two country roads are asphalt but do not have sidewalks; they are, however, very quiet with little traffic. Care is required crossing the marked pedestrian crosswalks at Mills Road and West Saanich Road. The most challenging part of the loop for wheels or walkers is the north-south dirt trail through Littlewood Forest as there are occasional roots and rocks.

Description of the route

Start. We began our walk at the northwest corner of the YYJ airport lands, Jubilee Park, which comprises a unique playground and covered picnic ground, parking lot, a nearby bus stop, and a bike rack. From there, we

headed west towards West Saanich Road and Patricia Bay. Be sure to take a selfie at the convex traffic mirror at the bend in the trail! Continue a little further to the pedestrian crosswalk with flashing lights at West Saanich Road – cross with caution and then look to your right to the path that heads north.

Trail at Patricia Bay, the Scoter Trail. Take the path north along the beautiful Scoter Trail, just up above the high tide line, looking west towards the Saanich Inlet and the Malahat on the other side. The path turns to packed gravel, and you will venture underneath Garry oaks and arbutus trees and enjoy the views of the bay. At the 1 km mark of your walk, you will reach fork in the trail (see photo). Take the right fork to the pedestrian crossing with flashing lights at the intersection of West Saanich Road and Munro Road. Cross carefully and head east along Munro Road.

Munro Road. After crossing West Saanich Road, it almost feels like you have suddenly been transported to a completely different environment, a lovely tranquil country road with fields of flowers, and the Fern and Oak farm stand on your right selling eggs and produce. Continue to head east for 1.5 km, and at the dead end of Munro Road, you will see the CRD marker for a shady 400-metre trail that heads south, through the Sandown Forest.

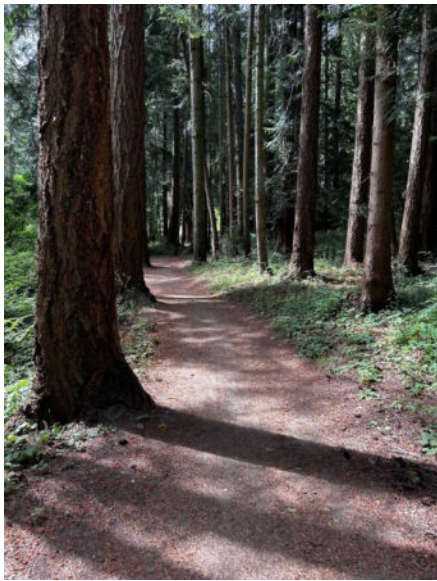
When you arrive at the intersection of Munro and Wilson, stop for a second and look to the south. There was once a railroad spur right here that was used by the BC Electric Railroad (BCER). Read more about this railroad in Edward Lesage's Part 2 of the BCER, here in this issue. [Part 1](#) is in the spring issue.



To think that an electric railway ran here (the BC Electric Railway, BCER). What would North Saanich have been like had the electric railway continued operation?

Sandown Forest and Littlewood Road. The trail through Sandown Forest ends at the juncture of Littlewood Road and Glamorgan Road. Head south along Littlewood (towards the airport) and enjoy watching kids having a great time biking fast and doing jumps North Saanich Free Ride Park on your

right. You will reach the intersection with Mills Road, which has a pedestrian crossing and flashing lights. Cross carefully and join the airport Flight Path.



Airport Flight Path. Turn right (west) back towards Patricia Bay and enjoy a nice downhill walk back to your starting point with views towards the water and the mountains on the Malahat side of the inlet.



Almost back! It's literally downhill from here – when did we gain all the elevation to have this nice downhill?

Two Bonus features (blue trails on map, above)

- 1. CRD trail next to cow pasture.** There is a CRD trail off of Munro Road that connects to Wilson Road to the north. It passes to the west of a farm that often has cows grazing in the pasture.



Entrance to the CRD trail from Munro Rd.



View of the trail. Sadly, no cows today.

2. Fickle Fig. Where Littlewood Road intersects with Mills Road, you are not far from the famous [Fickle Fig](#). Cross the road at the pedestrian crossing and take the Flight Path east. You will see it on the north side of Mills Road.



Because there is no pedestrian crosswalk at this spot, take your time crossing Mills Road from the driveway just the east of Fig. There is outdoor seating year round where you can sit and relax in their farm garden in the back, and look up at the nearby Garry oaks. The Fickle Fig is also the home of two Nigerian dwarf goats named Nutmeg and Cashew (not sure which of the two goats this one is). Enjoy your time at the Fig!

From Operating Rooms to Future Healthcare Workers: How a Community Continues to Shape Local Healthcare

June 25, 2026 Summer 2026

by Tabatha Golat

Each year, hundreds of people from across the Saanich Peninsula gather for an evening of celebration, generosity, and community spirit. While the event itself lasts only one night, its impact can be felt for years. The Saanich Peninsula Hospital & Healthcare Foundation's Spirit Gala has become a powerful example of what can happen when a community comes together around a shared goal of ensuring exceptional healthcare is available close to home.



The poster for the Saanich Peninsula Hospital & Healthcare Foundation Spirit Gala, titled "ENCHANTED FOREST", features a magical forest background with glowing lights and a lantern. The event is presented by the Peninsula Co-op and takes place on Saturday, November 14th, 2026, at the Mary Winspear Centre. The program includes a 3-course dinner, complimentary drinks, and entertainment by The Haven. Funds raised will support the foundation. Tickets are \$325, and a QR code is provided for purchase. Contact information is also listed.

Saanich Peninsula Hospital & Healthcare Foundation
SPIRIT GALA
ENCHANTED FOREST

Presented by
PENINSULA CO-OP

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14th 2026
MARY WINSPEAR CENTRE
DOORS & COCKTAIL RECEPTION 5:00 PM

3 COURSE DINNER | COMPLIMENTARY DRINKS | ENTERTAINMENT BY THE HAVEN

FUNDS RAISED WILL GO TOWARD THE
SAANICH PENINSULA HOSPITAL & HEALTHCARE FOUNDATION.

TICKETS \$325
TO PURCHASE TICKETS AND LEARN MORE SCAN THE QR CODE
CALL (250) 656-2948 | sphf.ca/spirit-gala-2026

GALA EVENING SPONSORS

PRESENTING	COCKTAIL	WINE	LOUNGE	ENTERTAINMENT
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Scotia Wealth Management	AMICA	FLORAL	FLORAL	

Last year, the Spirit Gala generated an extraordinary \$548,879 in donations during the event. The impact was then doubled when local philanthropist Trudy Busch generously matched the total, bringing the Gala's contribution to \$1,097,758 in support of the Enhancing Surgical Services and Parking Campaign at Saanich Peninsula Hospital. Those funds are already helping move important projects forward. Upgrades to surgical services will increase operating room capacity and help reduce wait times, while a parking expansion is expected to add over 100 new spaces for patients, families, and staff.

The results of community philanthropy can be seen throughout the hospital. For Dr. Patrick Yang, Surgical Site Chief at Saanich Peninsula Hospital, donor support continues to make a meaningful difference. Recently, Foundation-funded equipment helped improve care for patients requiring urgent eye procedures, allowing surgeons to deliver treatment more efficiently and effectively. Investments made possible through community generosity help ensure patients can access high-quality care locally while supporting healthcare teams with modern equipment and facilities.

These stories highlight the vital role local donors play in strengthening healthcare on the Peninsula. When residents support the Foundation, they are helping fund projects and equipment that directly benefit patients, families, and healthcare providers.

The Spirit Gala returns on November 14, 2026, with an Enchanted Forest theme, bringing together community members, healthcare supporters, and local leaders for an evening of celebration and impact. While guests will enjoy an evening of dining, entertainment, and fundraising, the event is ultimately about something much larger than a single evening. For decades, local donors have helped fund equipment, facility improvements, and healthcare initiatives that might not otherwise have been possible.

Looking ahead, the Foundation is preparing to focus on another important priority by supporting the education and development of future healthcare professionals who will care for our community in the years to come. The 2026 Spirit Gala will mark the launch of this new fundraising priority and offer guests a first look at the Foundation's next investment in local healthcare. Tickets are already nearly 50% sold, reflecting the strong community support the Gala continues to receive year after year.

As healthcare needs continue to grow across the Peninsula, one thing remains unchanged: when our community comes together, remarkable things happen. The Spirit Gala is a celebration of that spirit and a reminder that the future of healthcare is something we all help build together.

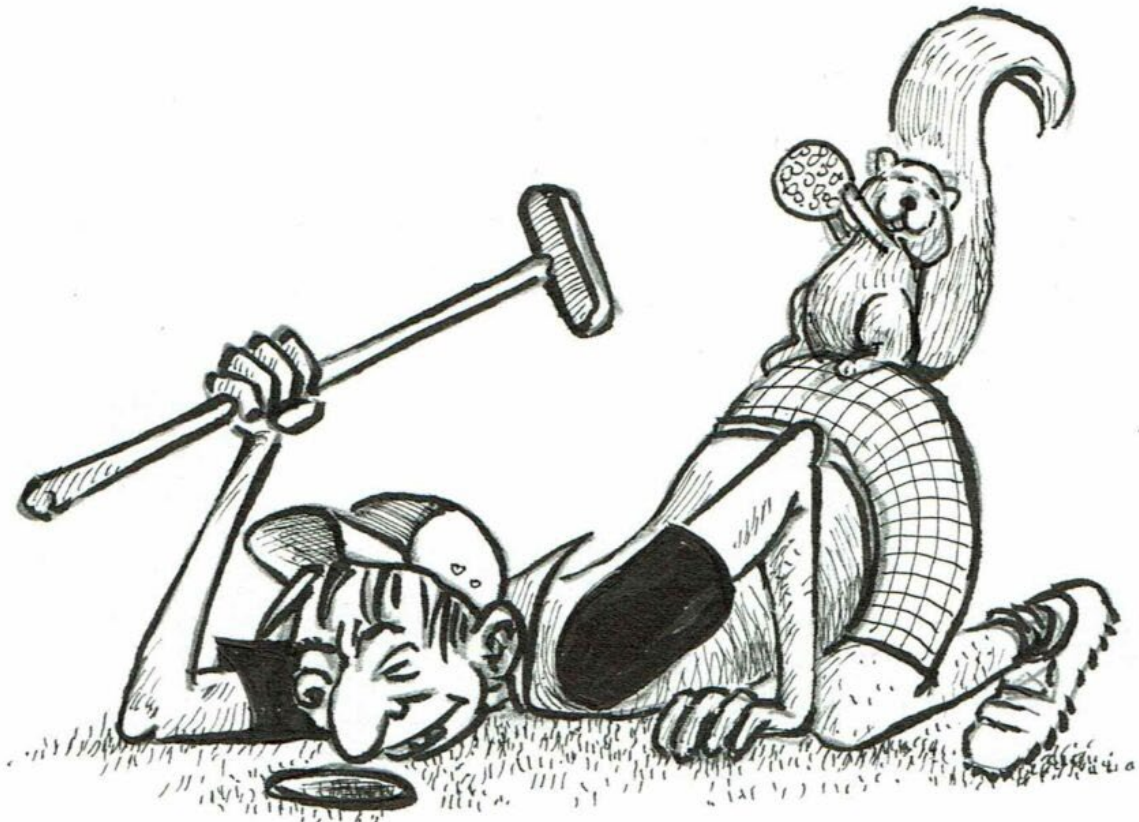
For more information or to purchase tickets, sphf.ca/spirit-gala-2026 or call [\(250\) 656-2948](tel:2506562948).

Disclosure: This article was provided by the Saanich Peninsula Hospital & Healthcare Foundation. ChatGPT was used for editing and copy refinement.

Tricky Squirrels, by Local North Saanich Cartoonist

June 25, 2026 Summer 2026

by Gerry Karagianis



Gerry Karagianis is a Navy veteran with 30 years experience in youth and family counseling. Gerry loves music, books, films, dark humour, and cartooning and spends his time on a North Saanich hobby farm with wife Michele and a chaotic menagerie.