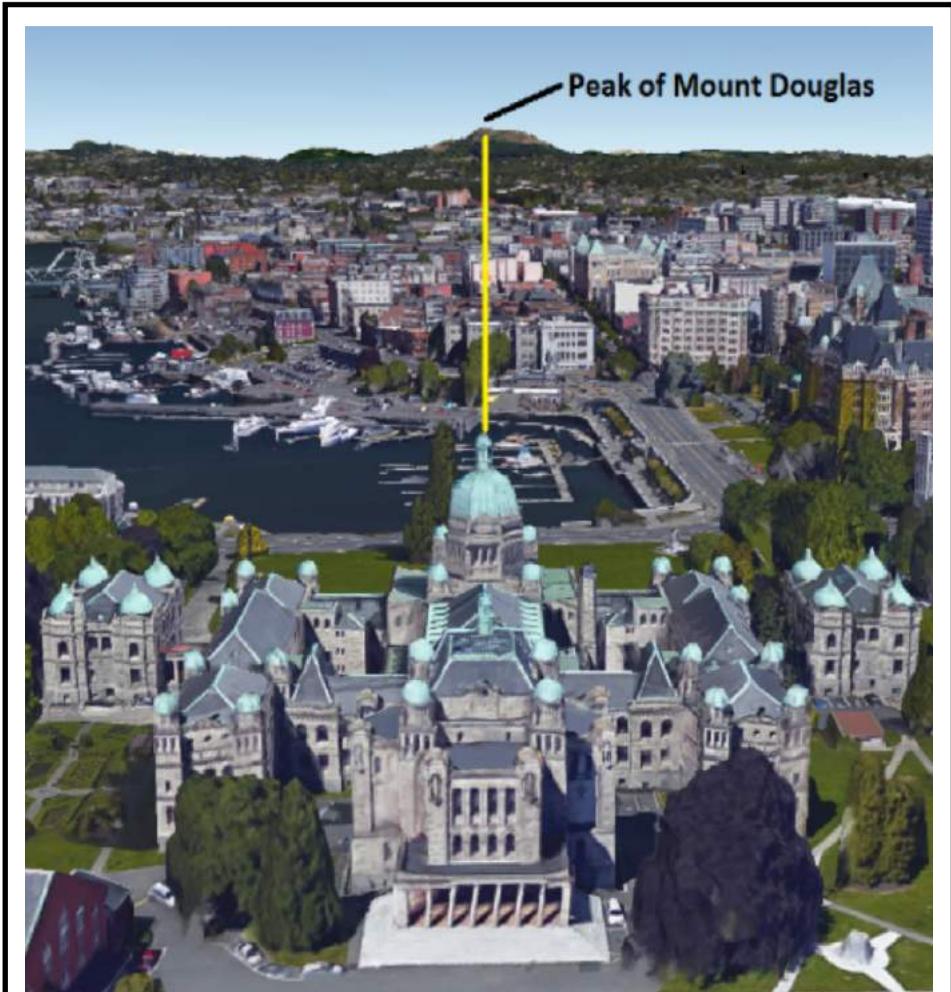


# Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society

## Fall 2018 Newsletter



Is this the start of the next chapter of the Da Vinci code? Will we see Tom Hanks in the park next year? For more, see inside.

## Message from the Board

As you read this edition of the newsletter you will sense it does not have the same rhythm you normally find. That's because it has been written and assembled by a committee (If you look closely you can see the joins). The sad reason for this departure is that Darrell Wick underwent major surgery in the fall and is now on the long road to recovery; we all wish him a complete and speedy one.

This totally unexpected event highlighted the structural problem we face as a volunteer Society. For the general day to day affairs members of the board can cope but for the larger single issues that require a quick response we need greater involvement from the membership if the society is to continue and prosper.

We'd like to invite you to board meetings—there are about six meetings per year—and ask for your input on all issues. After you spend some time on areas of particular interest, and if you feel like the society is a good fit, we encourage you to stand for a position on the board.

This is the structure we had in the early days, nearly 30 years ago now, when everything was very fluid and we flew by the seat of our pants. It worked very well then and it may be time to return that structure as we contemplate the decades ahead.

If you have an interest in any of the following areas please let us know.

**Membership Drives • Invasive Plants • Fish Habitat • Trails • The Beach  
Building Society Membership • Mount Douglas Park in general**

Cedars are terribly sensitive to change of time and light – sometimes they are bluish cold-green, then they turn yellow warm-green – sometimes their boughs flop heavy and sometimes float, then they are fairy as ferns and then they droop, heavy as heartaches. – Emily Carr.



*The memorial plaque in the boulevard on Shelbourne Avenue, San Juan Avenue, and Elnido Road.*

## Memorial Avenue on Shelbourne

This year is the centenary of the 1918 armistice which brought the Great War to a close. So, it is fitting that the memorial which honours those who served and sacrificed for Canada in that conflict has been rededicated along Shelbourne Street. Two parts to the memorial include the interpretive panel and neighbourhood map at the junction with San Juan, and the avenue of plane trees from the park's Churchill entrance south along Shelbourne to Torquay.

Travellers along this road will have seen the new signs mounted on posts proclaiming the memorial way; the writing is on a metal circle which encloses a London plane tree leaf with poppies at 3 and 9 o'clock.

It is no exaggeration to say that this rededication adds to the transformation of this section of Shelbourne; still planned are stone gateposts at the north and south ends of Shelbourne. It now hard to remember that twenty years ago this was a pretty utilitarian suburban road with gravel and scrub grass along its

edges and speeding commuters rushing to another destination. In recent years, Saanich has made a series of upgrades to improve the general ambiance but municipal planning can only go so far.

We live 13 000 km away from the site of the carnage on the World War One battlefields but, thanks to a group of volunteers, we now have an enduring reminder, literally and figuratively on our door steps, of what happened there and the part Canada and Canadians played in ending the conflict.

This would not have been done without the extraordinary efforts of Ray Travers and his small band of volunteers. Not only did he bring together various levels of government, a pipe band from the Canadian Scottish regiment, the Naden brass band from Maritime Forces Pacific and youth from the Regional Cadet Corps for the ceremony but he has also created a lasting and unique enclave within Saanich. So, reserve part of the next Remembrance Day for a visit to the Generals' monument and the new Interpretive Panel at Shelbourne and San Juan.



– From all of us: Many Thanks, Ray.

## Storm water grate marking

This educational program is part of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) efforts to bring the plight of fish in our coastal waters into the classrooms of local schools. There are several levels to the program. Incubator tanks in schools give elementary school children the opportunity to raise young salmon in their classrooms prior to releasing them into the wild. Some of these fry are released into Douglas Creek every year. Next, there is the grate marking program that allow students of all ages to take part in raising the awareness of residents in a particular watershed to the dangers of pouring paints, oils, liquid fertilizers etc into the storm drains. Thanks to Kate Macdonald from D.F.O. who supplied paint, stencils, and safety equipment for 28 students from Claremont



*Graham Shorthill of the Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society speaks to students from Claremont Secondary School near the weir on Douglas Creek.*



*Students from Claremont Secondary School marking storm drains near Mount Douglas Park on a beautiful day in November.*

school who took part in the activity on a glorious fall day in November. They marked the grates along Harvest Lane, Parkside Crescent and the side roads between Cedar Hill Road and the park boundary as far south as Winchester. They painted the fish emblems, delivered flyers to houses in the neighbourhood, and answered the questions from curious residents. Fortunately, their teacher Joanna Linger had prepared them very well. They confidently fielded questions and, in doing so, gained the praise and thanks of the residents.

Once that part of the field trip was complete, the party walked to the weir for an impromptu talk on separating oil and water followed by a hike to the beach which was highlighted by showing the sort of restoration work the society has been doing over the years. There was time for photographs, congratulations and a stroll along the beach before the bus arrived to take them back to school. All in all, a wonderful afternoon and such a pleasure to have so many young intelligent people take an interest in what we have been doing.

## Park Ambassador program

The Friends of Mt Douglas Park had proposed a Park Ambassador program for some time and early this year Saanich approved it as a pilot project for the summer of 2018. There was a good response to the call for volunteers who were briefed and trained by Saanich before they ventured out with their distinctive vests to help park visitors. The overwhelming response to their presence has been extremely positive and illuminating. The most striking fact to emerge is that people come from all over the world to this park and they revel in its wild and natural beauty so close to a city.



*Park Ambassadors meeting to learn about restoration work in Douglas Creek. The volunteers met several times to learn more about the park.*

After the pilot comes the report: this one was well received by Council who voted to repeat the exercise again next summer.

Since then, the need to protect the creek from intruders during the salmon spawning season has become an issue. One way it could be tackled is to have ambassadors patrol the creek between mid-October and the end of November to give the returning salmon a chance. A work in progress.



*From left to right: Darrell Wick, Ed Wiebe, and Claude Maurice, of the Friends of Mt Douglas Park Society, participated in the Saanich Park Ambassador pilot project in the summer of 2018.*

## Pumpkins in the Park

What do you think about the pumpkins left in the park after Hallowe'en? In the last decade or two it has become something of an informal tradition. It began as a way to dispose of pumpkins after the trick-or-treating was done. Now, however, residents of Saanich and other municipalities have green bins that serve that purpose. Mount Douglas Park is a designated Natural Areas Park and the Park Charter reads in part, "The lands known as Mount Douglas Park are hereby reserved in perpetuity for the protection and preservation of the natural environment for the inspiration, use and enjoyment of the public." Does this include Hallowe'en pumpkins and the associated cleanup?

Should the Friends of Mount Douglas Park discourage this activity? Let us know what you think about this.

# Was the BC Legislature built to line up with the summit of Mount Douglas?

This is a question that comes from the knowledge that the architect Francis Rattenbury liked to position his buildings geometrically and the legislature is not aligned with the city grid as you might expect. So, what is it aligned with?

Kris Trenholm recently brought the image on the cover of this newsletter to our attention suggesting the alignment was with the summit of Mount Douglas. A present day surveyor checked the alignment and was surprised at how close it was. Some years ago Kris became intrigued by the triangular elements that make up the façade of the Empress Hotel and he took his ideas to Monday magazine and an article was published under the title *Location Location Location* including an illustration showing a series of equilateral triangles superimposed on the front of the Empress Hotel making it look like a distant cousin of the pyramid that sits in the forecourt of the Louvre in Paris!

At this point we say good bye to hard facts and welcome speculation and possible fantasy. In the Monday article it was suggested that Rattenbury was a freemason and the triangular designs were Masonic symbols which if true, is not too much of a stretch. However, the further claim was made that alignment of the legislature was also done in the same spirit: viewed from the Captain Vancouver's lookout, Mount Douglas looks like a rough triangle and the axis between the two sites runs 12° east of true north. We may never know whether or not masonic symbolism was in the architect's mind when the structure was planned, but it seems unlikely that facing Mt. Douglas in this way was an accident.

As we know next to nothing about that the intricacies of freemasonry, we are asking for advice from readers; if you can shed any light on this matter please go to the website, Twitter, or Facebook, and leave a message. This could an exercise in pure fantasy or, conceivably, the opening to another insight into the role this remarkable park has played in the development of this city.

## We went looking for fish and what did we find?

We're always on the lookout for salmon returning to Douglas Creek in November. Year to year the sightings vary. This year has not brought very positive results. We had a report from a school group of a fish sighting in late November but were unable to confirm this independently. Otters were seen near the creek; they are usually a reliable sign of the presence of salmon.

Other issues this fall has been the lack of rain. The creek has rarely been high enough to give returning salmon a place to swim.

Additionally, dogs and people have been observed frequently in the creek near the creek mouth. People and animals disturb the creek bed. These activities cloud the water and uproot any eggs that fish may have deposited.



*Looking upstream from the mouth of Douglas Creek. There has long been a dam of logs pushed into the creek by storm waves. However, there is a very clear passage (on the left in this image) for salmon to pass through this barrier and enter the creek. High tide and reasonably high flow in the creek are necessary so that fish can cross the beach.*

# Invasive Plant Report

## Park Restoration - 2018

In 2018, as in past years, a small group of dedicated volunteers have donated many hours of their time working to improve the health of Mount Douglas Park. They restore sections of the Park seriously degraded with invasive plant species and off trail activities. Over many years, volunteers have removed countless tonnes of invasive plant material and have made major gains on rescuing nearly half of the park from these unwanted plants.

The work is varied and generally doable for most people of average fitness and it's so rewarding because the results we see are so amazing. Ridding the Park of non-native plants reduces competition for moisture and sunlight, giving native plants a chance to recover and thrive. As each area is cleared it's assessed for sufficient native vegetation, and if needed, new plantings are added. *Note* – Fencing newly planted areas has become necessary in recent years to protect young plants from trampling.



*Long time volunteer Susan Billingham in 2009 on Maddock Trail. She's holding a mid sized weed wrench used to remove E. Holly from the cleared area in the photo.*

In 2018 volunteers restored a good portion of park on the east side of Maddock Trail. Additionally, work is happening in the very large area between Mercer and Glendenning Trails. Both areas were originally cleared in 2010–2011, (approximately) and work will continue in both areas into 2019.

## Reflections on Volunteering in Mt Douglas Park

Volunteers were recently asked what motivates them to show up to work in the park, in all kinds of weather, week in and out, and pull weeds. They were also asked what aspects of working in the Park, if any, they found to be not so positive. Some very thoughtful answers were received and rather than presume to paraphrase the excellent responses we'll share them with you verbatim.

“It feels so rewarding to look back at the forest when we finish a session of invasive plant control and see what a difference we have made. I remember one area that we worked in that had a particularly dense ivy infestation, so dense that we could not see the ground. A few months later the ground was covered with blooming wild lilies, plants that would have died off had we not done our work. The work is not particularly strenuous, although it can be tedious at times, and there is a strong sense of team amongst the crew of volunteers. I value my time with the Pulling Together team.”

“Love of nature and a chance to do something worthwhile for the environment. This type of work gives me a sense of purpose. The conservation movement is very dear to my heart so when opportunities arise to help out, I take them.

“Invasive plants are a big problem that will take a long time to eradicate. This is important work to eliminate invasives and allow native plants to thrive and to have a healthy ecosystem. It is very satisfying to see what we accomplish with only two hours each week. Over the long term these short sessions add up to make a big impact.

“The work gives me a sense of purpose and being out in the forest which is my favourite type of nature.”

“- satisfaction from doing something you believe in

- exercise
- a few hours of peace and quiet
- part of a team, social aspect
- belief that the forest environment is good for one's health
- after retirement from my daily work, needing something to do that I felt was worthwhile of my time and efforts.

- very beneficial—in the short term. A sense of accomplishment provides a sense of positiveness that can help one deal with some of life’s stresses. We do make a difference, at least for a few years. Years, not days or weeks. Fully aware that nothing is permanent, nothing is forever.
- always feel better coming out of the park than going in.”

Two responses regarding the not so positive aspects of volunteering in the Park:

“I am anxious around dogs so I don't like having them charge towards me when I am working.”

“seeing how other people treat the park, destroying vegetation, leaving garbage and messes behind.”

Reflecting on these comments by caring people who work hands-on in the Park it’s clear the benefits of volunteering in the Park far outweigh the negative aspects. We would welcome many more volunteers to join us in this work. Much remains to be done and we’re not getting any younger so come out and give us a hand whenever you can!

We hope all Park visitors, over time, will come to appreciate the special place that is Mount Douglas Park and treat it with the respect and care it truly deserves. It’s not just a “fun” place to visit. As long as the Park ecosystems remain healthy, the trees and vegetation in the Park actually provide all of us with many health benefits, whether we realize it or not. Check out the term “*forest bathing*”.

We must all do what we can to preserve and protect this wonderful place for the health of our community now and far into the future.



*Volunteers clearing ivy in Mt Douglas Park.*

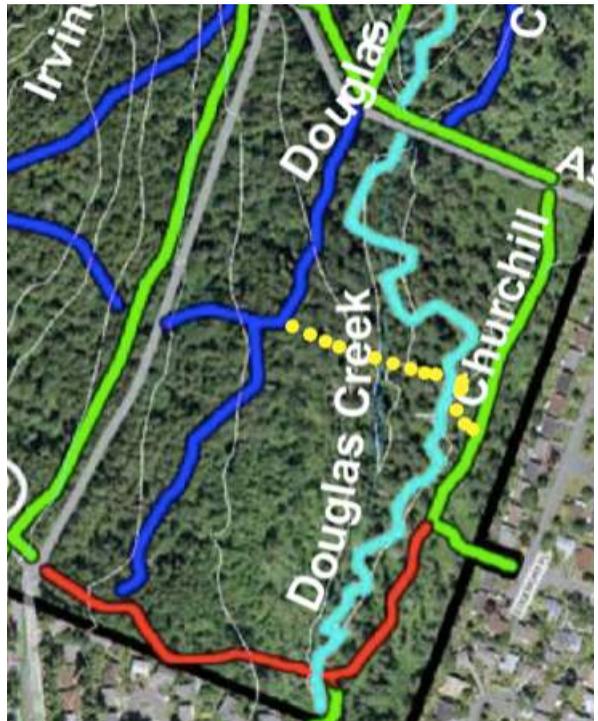
# Anticipating a Bridge over Douglas Creek

Good news from the Saanich Parks budgeting process is that staff are now fully committed to a new trail and creek bridge, just northwest of the Edgemont entrance, and linked thru to the mid-block crossing of Cedar Hill Road.

The map shows the anticipated location for the new trail and bridge as a dotted line.

Our goal, now shared, is that this plan will eliminate a dead end that encourages the wrong kind of human and dog activity, wading in the creek, and provide improved vantage points. That, in turn, will reduce the effects dogs and people at creek level, where we risk ongoing damage to the long-term efforts to re-nature the banks and the creek itself.

The most exciting physical aspect of the project is a 9 m (30 feet) span foot-bridge, to which the Friends have committed \$10,000. Saanich's draft commits a portion of the Mt. Douglas Park trail money contributed by the Alberg property developers. The nature and form of the bridge are still in early days, and no engineering has been done. Width has not even been settled. The reason for such a long span over the relatively narrow waterway is to keep the footings away from the most environmentally sensitive areas.



# Links to the Lochside trail

Across the Lochside trail, in North Quadra, the Beckworth Farm is being developed. It is close to the Lochside trail near the bridge over Blenkinsop Lake and the tentative plan is to build a trail from the farm to the lake. From there, it would link up with the Gordon Head connector to the south at Mt Douglas Cross Road, and Lohbrunner to the north. And they, in turn, lead directly to the park. Another piece of the trails puzzle falls into place; we have long wanted greater integration with the wider regional trail system and this goes a long way to providing it. Of course, we have to ensure that the regional trail users follow the current and future etiquette for people travelling through the park but these steps emphasize the regional nature of the park; a major node in the system, to use the jargon.



*Property development projects at the end of Beckwith Avenue in the lower left of this image will provide for trails that connect across the Blenkinsop Valley via the Lochside Trail and Lohbrunner Rd to Mt Douglas Park.*

# 100 Crayfish

One hundred crayfish were released into Douglas Creek in early December. They were collected from Goldstream River by Howard English Hatchery and transplanted by them. Hopefully dogs will be kept out of the creek. The ongoing support by Howard English Hatchery is greatly appreciated. Their support has been critical for the successful Douglas Creek restoration.

Crayfish are an important part of the natural river ecosystem here on Vancouver Island. They feed on a variety of worms, insects, animals and on plant material. They in turn provide food for otters and predatory fish.



*A signal crayfish, Pacifastacus leniusculus,*

## Storm Water

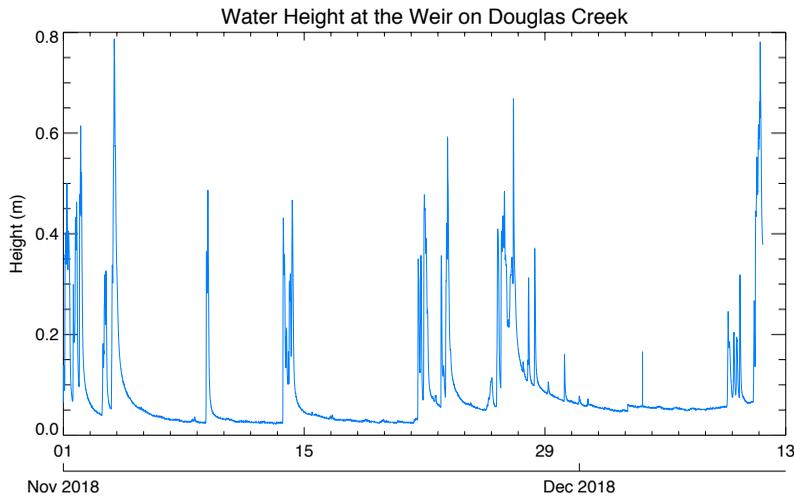
One remaining part of the creek restoration puzzle is better management of storm water. At present water collected by the storm water system rushes into the creek at the weir whenever it rains. The flow, and the variation in flow, can



*Storm water rushing over the weir and filling the creek channel. Below: November and December storm water events recorded at the weir.*

be enormous. Storm water rushing along the creek scours the channel, moves loose material in the creek bed, and may be washing vertebrate (fish and amphibians) and invertebrate (insects and other similar creatures) out to sea.

Saanich Parks and Creeks & Waterways have done a great job stabilizing the creek banks, perhaps it's time for engineering to step up and address the storm surge issue.



*November and December storm water events recorded at the weir.*

## Glendenning Trail Restoration

The beginning of December saw Saanich Parks putting the finishing touches on this year's trail re-building, at the east side of the sand gully. The work included a construction bypass trail on the west side and several erosion limiting barriers; the main causes of the erosion are water flow and hikers. It also included a mid-gully bench, already well used. Parks has done a great job. If the Friends have any concerns, they are with the retention of the bypass trail, effectively doubling the area of "un-natural" landscape for the length of the gully. On the other hand, one could argue the gully is a unique feature, justifying viewing from both sides. We look forward to the balance of the upgrading on Upper

Glendenning; below the gully, in the sand above it, and thru the rocks up to the parking lot. The photographs, particularly in colour, clearly show what a great improvement has been made over the last couple of years to this damaged area. It is also encouraging that we now have the techniques to address the long standing problem of erosion within the park.



*New features of the Glendenning Trail.*



*Four recent scenes from Mt. Douglas Park.*



*Four recent scenes from the park.*



# Protecting the Summits

We Friends got good news recently; that Parks, next year, hopes to strategically protect the natural areas adjacent to the summit trail. This has become a concern since (the very successful) invasives removal on the summits made it so easy for park users to wander. The protection will mainly be split rail fencing. The project will aim to re-furbish the summit trail at the same time. These works should synchronize with, at long last, the new information kiosk, parking lot upgrades, and a new short connector trail between the summit trail and the viewing deck on top of the transmitter building.



*The lone arbutus on the summit of Little Mt Doug is a popular spot to take a break.*

Parks will not do the East Summit in 2019, but will consider it and Little Mt Doug for 2020, similarly to keep green space from becoming a moonscape.

Little Mt. Doug is under the same consideration mainly out of concern for the summit's lone arbutus. It's in danger of being "loved to death", and there is an argument for fencing it off. Parks will also take another look at the south face of Little Mt. Doug. It is hazardous, particularly going down, and the travelled area is constantly getting wider and less green.

*Any thoughts? Let us know.*

## Board of Directors

President	Darrell Wick	1491 Edgemont Road	V8N 4P7	477-9291
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Social Media	Ed Wiebe	1628 Longacre Drive	V8N 2N1	721-4483
At-large	Graham Shorthill	4623 Cordova Bay Road	V8X 3V6	658-5873
At-large	Alan Walton	4236 Parkside Pl.	V8N 4V5	477-5003

## Membership Renewal - Gift Membership

Providing information via this newsletter about the Park is an important Society function. We want to reach more Park users and Park neighbours. Why not **give someone you know a gift subscription and include it with your renewal?** A one-year membership isn't much more than the price of a good cup of coffee! You provide the gift and we'll send notification to the recipient of your generosity. We hope you will continue to support the work of the Society for another year.

Gift From: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Membership **4 years \$20**  3 years \$15  2 years \$10  1 year \$5

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