

Volunteer Spotlight

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Rick Buchanan - Streamkeeper

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Fishing, ice skating and playing army in the Beaver Lodge Forest Lands, swimming and fishing in the estuary – **Rick Buchanan** has witnessed Campbell River's transformation over the past four decades. As a child of the 1970s, he has seen the community being focused on the big known industries. Swimming in some parts of the estuary still gave adventurous kids "the itch" and most fishing attempts were unsuccessful. He is happy to see how Campbell River's natural areas have been restored and revitalized after some of the bigger industries have shut down. Playing a part in this process is what motivated Rick to get involved with Greenways Land Trust. This partnership is a win for both Greenways and Rick: Greenways is very lucky to have him and his fantastic motivation and skill set on board, while Rick found a great way of staying active and effective in means that his health allows.

Recently we asked him some questions about his work, and went for a little walk to the Kingfisher Creek Watershed that he cares for.

When did you start working with Greenways Land Trust?

Greenways first caught my attention when I saw a Streamkeeper Workshop ad in the paper. I wanted to know more about what Greenways did and what they were involved with so I walked straight into the office and asked how I could get involved. They recommended that I take the Streamkeeper Workshop and so I did. That brought me in touch with lots of people that I still work and volunteer with to this day. My first Greenways project was out on Stonefly Creek, north of York Road, in August 2015. Together with Stacy Larsen and Dave Cunnings we did some log placement in a 200m long section of the stream to help rehabilitate its sides. They asked me to do some chainsaw work when they heard that I used to be a professional faller. My second project with Greenways took place on the same creek. That time we worked with high school students and trained them in planting trees. After that Dave Cunnings involved me into his stream work on Simms Creek and I have been working with those boys ever since.

What do you think is Greenways' biggest success that you have been a part of?

Baikie Island is a great project that has been a true community effort. I have only been involved with this project on a small scale by removing Yellow Iris which is part of Greenway's invasive species management. I used to ride my mini bike down there when I was a kid in the late 1970s. It is very impressive what has been done. It was totally industrial. We went down there to fish and caught one every 6-7 days. There was a lot of mug in the water and it gave you the itch when you swam in it. We preferred swimming off the former dock by the Myrt Thompson trail. It is a night and day difference. It is very visual now, so obvious how much work has been done there. It paid off, look at the birds, the rabbit tracks, there is life out there.

How would you describe the CR community regarding volunteer engagement?

Lots of people are involved in different aspects of volunteer work. There are quite a few volunteers in Campbell River but there are also quite a few that are on the fence that don't know where to go or what to do. More information and direction for those people would help.



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Which is your favorite CR greenway and why?

My favorite greenspace in Campbell River is not marked as a greenway. It is the end of Evergreen Road and used to be a trail that would take you past the Beaver Lodge Forest Lands and as far as to Mount Washington. It is only one block from my house. We have even been up there with the streamkeepers and placed fry in some of the creeks to get a little bit of life on that end. The area is a main feeder system for Simms Creek. It is in between Evergreen and the Highway, close to the Holy Witness Hall. We used to build trails in the Beaver Lodge Forest Lands when we were kids. Playing army in there, we ran around in the forest on deer trails, which then eventually became mountain bike trails and then eventually became what they are now. What is known as the Butterfly Trail now, we used to call Fishing Rope because it used to have fishing ponds on it. Beavers build dams which created little pools and in the winter time we used to skate on those ponds.

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If you had a magic ball that would let you see ten years into the future, how would CR and its greenways have improved?

The continuous loop of Campbell River would be a benefit to go into the next 10 years to draw in people from far and wide. They can ride a mountain bike from Willow Point and end up in Campbellton. That would be pretty sweet. Once you are in Campbellton you can choose to go down the trails towards the dam and the former mill. My wish would be to get the loop finalized, safe, wheelchair accessible. It should serve all purposes of recreation from extreme mountain biking to relaxed walks with baby strollers. The success of the Sea Walk proves that things sometimes need a bit of time and a lot of investment but they are possible and pay off. Campbell River loves its Sea Walk.



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What rewards do you receive from volunteering?

I don't really do it for a reward system or a feedback for myself. I like to be involved with projects that are improving things. Just for the sake of doing it. A benefit to a stream or the people themselves – that is something I am going to pursue.

Is there anything else you would like to share as a final thought?

I wasn't sure if I was able to do anything ever again after being injured. I had been a faller for over 12 years. After a work accident back in the day I got given 100% non-employable, I had no leg bones that were not broken. I can't sit for a long time, I can't stand for a long time, I can't lift things. Greenways gave me a chance to grab a chainsaw and a shovel and said "do what you can do". The Simms Creek crew for example knows about my limitations and understands when I need to take a rest once in a while. Working with them is really great.



Our Mission is to restore, sustain and protect natural areas and critical habitats, particularly ecological and recreational greenways, for the benefit of our community.

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