

# Volunteer Spotlight

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## SANDRA MILLIGAN - President

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Sandra is a volunteer through and through. From early in life she has been involved in some form of volunteerism. Starting with Student groups and other community forums she is now the current president of Greenways Land Trust. This is a position she is proud of and you can see from her enthusiasm that she has found a great place to put her energy. Upon moving to new communities she has found it a great way to connect, and at the same time build up the place she calls home. Campbell River is indeed lucky to have her passionate commitment. With a strong community mindedness, and a growing connection to the natural world, Sandra is a great example to others and her story is a good way to start off this new column.

Recently Eiko went for a walk with her in the Beaver Lodge lands and had her show him some areas she is passionate about. We also asked her some questions about her volunteer efforts.

*Eiko- When did you start working with Greenways Land Trust?*

Sandra- Like so many of our volunteers, my first event with Greenways was a Broom Bash, over 10 years ago. In 2008 Greenways guided me on my project to install directional signage in the Beaver Lodge Lands. When I wanted to fight invasive plants in Campbell River, Greenways provided the support I needed to develop an action plan and access funding. I've been a director since 2008 and President since 2015.

*E- How do you primarily spend your time when you are not volunteering for Greenways?*

S- I teach university biology full-time at North Island College, since 2003. My three children have just moved on to adult lives at university. I have been a competitive runner and triathlete, spending many hours in our trail systems. I always have some self-learning project on the go, whether it be improving bird and plant identification skills, history of the local area, or language skills in Mandarin and Japanese.

*E- What are Greenways' successes that you have been a part of?*

S- The small projects that launched me on this path are the most special to me: Jubilee Trail, the trail signage in the Beaver Lodge Lands, knotweed eradication from environmentally sensitive areas, public education talks, and conifers growing at the end of Myrt Thompson trail.

As President, in the past 1½ years Greenways has expanded and diversified our revenue sources considerably due to our staff's success with grant applications and generous support of our donors. Salaried hours have tripled and we now have multi-year funding that provides stability. Federal grants bring significant funds into our community, and allow our staff to expand restoration projects. One role as President during this expansion is to help with administrative tasks: new job descriptions, hiring of 4 new staff members, ensuring policy and procedures are in place, orienting staff to the organization. Additionally, the President should set the tone for the organization; that is easy to do when Greenways is working on so many uplifting, community-enhancing projects that improve our quality of life and engage people with our natural spaces.

*E- How would you describe the CR community regarding volunteer engagement?*

S- Campbell River residents are exceptional volunteers. *Campbell River's Vital Signs* (produced by the CR Community Foundation) reports that in 2010, 75% of our residents engaged in volunteer work, significantly higher than provincial and federal rates that are both below 50%! At Greenways almost every project depends on volunteers, from the Board members who provide guidance, to trail volunteers, to the hundreds of school children who plant trees and everyone who helps out at our community events. Each person's investment is important to ensuring our natural spaces are maintained and restored.

*E- Which is your favorite CR greenway and why?*

S- It's hard to choose any one, each has its unique value: Kingfisher is for wetland bird watching; Myrt Thompson for water fowl and purple martins and little mammals; Beaver Lodge for running and riding. However, Willow Creek is my "home" trail. Just 2 minutes from the door, the story of the season unfolds: new spring buds and bird songs, the summer coolness of the trees, winter wrens and woodpeckers and always, the calming gurgle of the creek.



It's great to see a positive change in a place and know that you played a role in that improvement.

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

S- My wish list:

- Completion of the Greenways loop, with a safe connection between the ERT and Myrt Thompson trail, and a board walk from the end of Myrt Thompson trail along the shoreline to Tye Spit: then I'll organize an annual February Birding Counting Festival!
- Investment in the Urban Forest Management Plan: development of a culture in town that recognizes the value of every tree, leading to more planting, and more preservation of our important trees throughout town
- Funding for an Invasive Species Coordinator to develop an inventory of invasive plants and prioritize treatments so we can eradicate invasive plants from our environmentally sensitive areas around town.
- That everyone who lives in Campbell River has the opportunity to connect with nature on a regular basis.



E- What rewards do you receive from volunteering?

S- It's great to see a positive change in a place and know that you played a role in that improvement. In 2008 I was quite concerned about development along the Jubilee Parkway; it seemed like development might remove trees right up to the edge of the road. I learned the city had a plan to build a trail there, but not for another 5 years. I presented a plan to City

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Council, and they allowed Greenways staff to oversee that project, with funding available for out of work forestry workers. The Jubilee Trail was completed far ahead of schedule and at significantly reduced cost than what the City had budgeted.

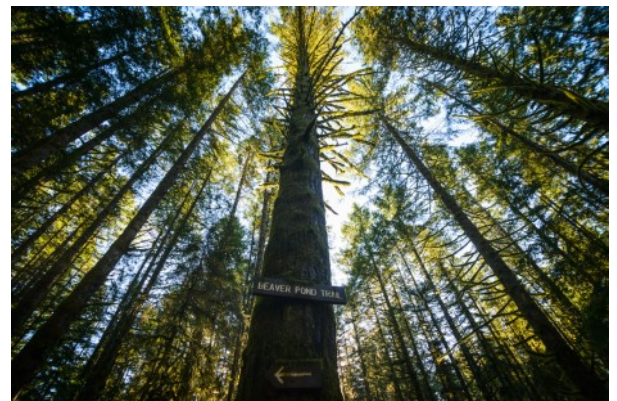
E- Is there anything else you would like to share as a final thought?

S- Many people feel a strong connection to some natural space in their community. When we take a step forward to get involved in the care of that place we develop an even deeper connection that can make our lives more meaningful, and improves that place that we care about.

Get involved – it feels great!

Many people feel a strong connection to some natural space in their community. Get involved – it feels great!

It was great to get out for a walk on a beautiful Campbell River winters day with Sandra and hear about her passion and efforts she puts into the local trails. Helping make greenspace areas better and more accessible for local residents, and visitors, to enjoy. And she said it was a treat to just get out and stroll along and enjoy the trail on a sunny day, in comparison to her usual working hard at maintaining them or running for her training regime. Thank you Sandra for your efforts over the years to make this community a better place.



Stay tuned for next months

**Volunteer Spotlight** featuring *Rick Buchanan*.



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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