

PORT ALBERNI

VALLEY VIBE

WINTER 2025

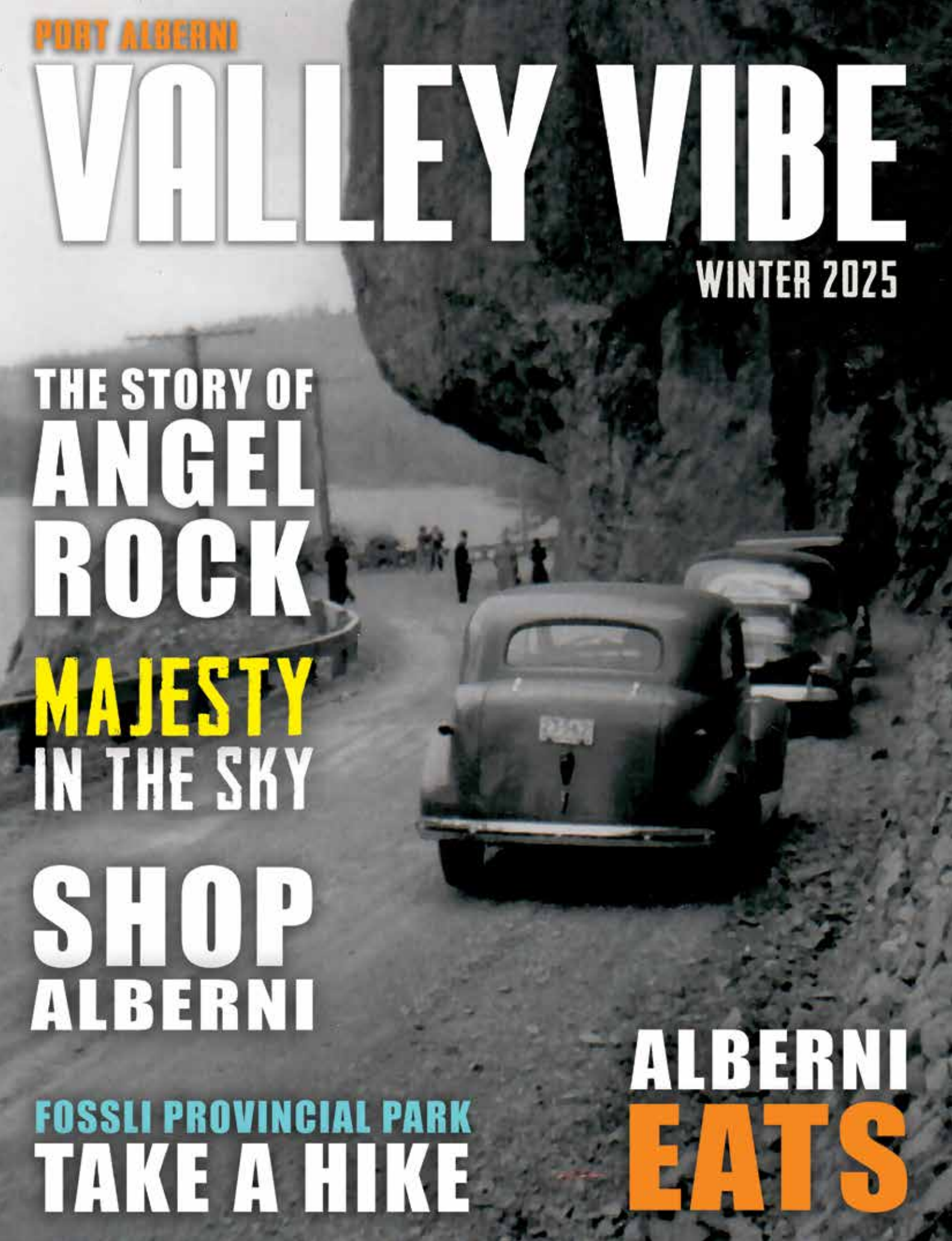
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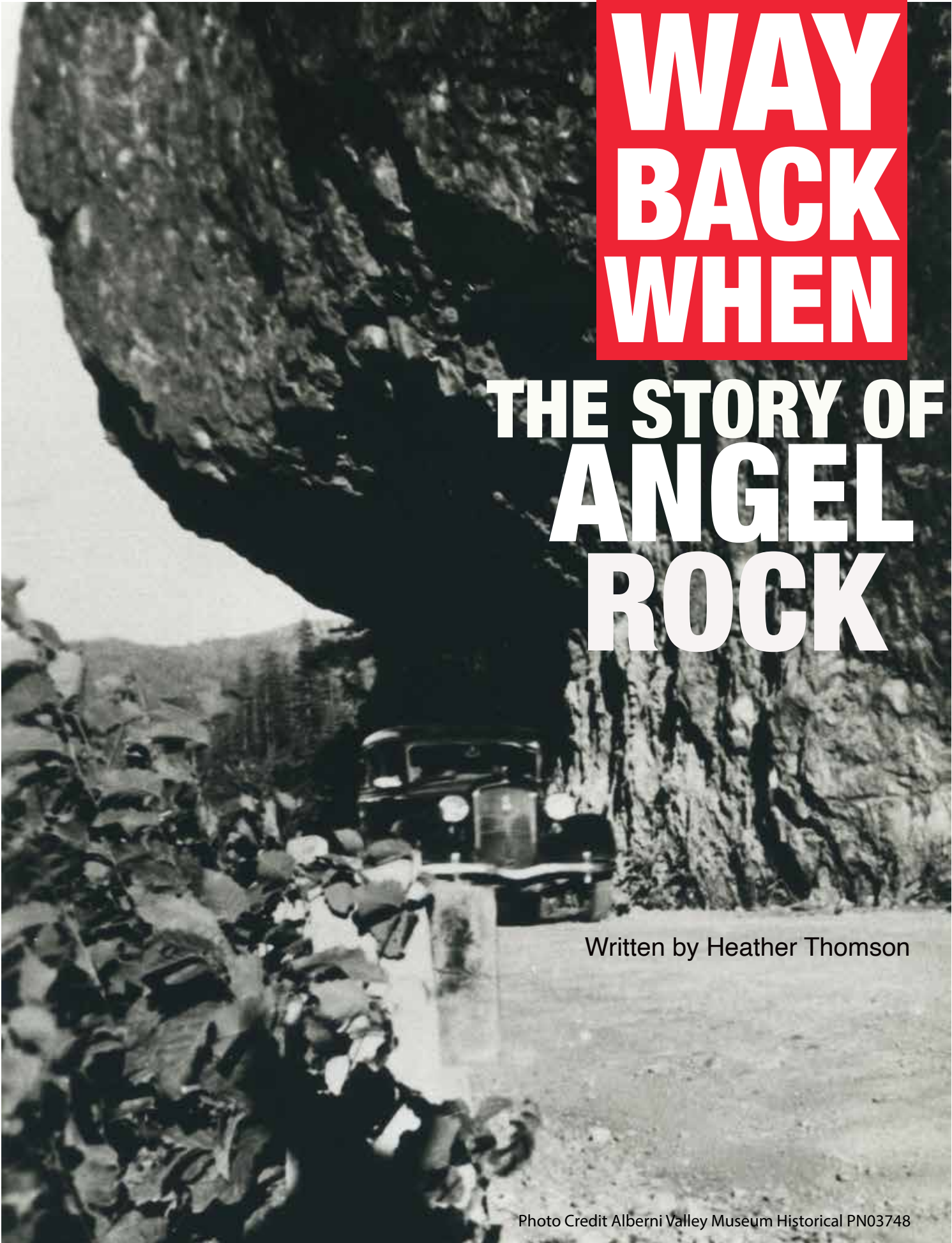
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WAY BACK WHEN

THE STORY OF ANGEL ROCK

Written by Heather Thomson

Photo Credit Alberni Valley Museum Historical PN03748

Today, if you want to visit Port Alberni, you get the opportunity to see some pretty amazing sites along the highway leading to the Alberni Valley. Although the trees in Cathedral Grove are impressive, many travellers drive past another historic spot without even knowing it – an outcropping of rock known as Angel Rock.

In the mid-1800, settlers started to explore around the central Island in search of opportunity. Fur traders had already established a presence in Qualicum, but the pass to the now Alberni Valley proved challenging and restrictive. Soon they discovered the trading trail used by the First Nations of the area, and fur traders started crossing the Beaufort Range into the Alberni Valley. With settlers arriving by land and sea, in 1886 an 86-kilometre wagon road was built from the Alberni Inlet to Nanaimo on the north shore of Cameron Lake.

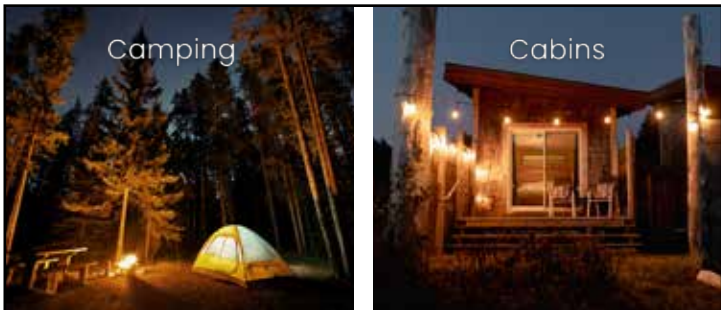
In 1907, the Canadian Pacific Railway began a new road to the Alberni Valley, this time on the southern side of Cameron Lake. At the time this was quite controversial because for 20 years naturalists had been lobbying to have the area now known as Cathedral Grove protected and the massive trees in the area preserved. The new road would mean many ancient Douglas fir and cedars would have to be fallen.

In 1910, the wagon road shifted to the southern side of Cameron Lake, leaving the other side free for rail travel. Opening this stretch of roadway was not easy. The road was cleared of trees but one big obstacle stood in the way – the rock face along the lake.

It took extensive blasting to get the road to a condition that was passible. It meant creating a tunnel through the rock, so, when the highway was done this geological landmark was partially destroyed. This area would eventually become known as Angel Rock.

For years Angel Rock allowed people to drive through a piece of the foothills of Mt. Arrowsmith. But the old wagon road could no longer support the traffic that was travelling the banks of Cameron Lake.

In 1940, the road around the lake was straightened to allow larger vehicles and logging trucks to pass.




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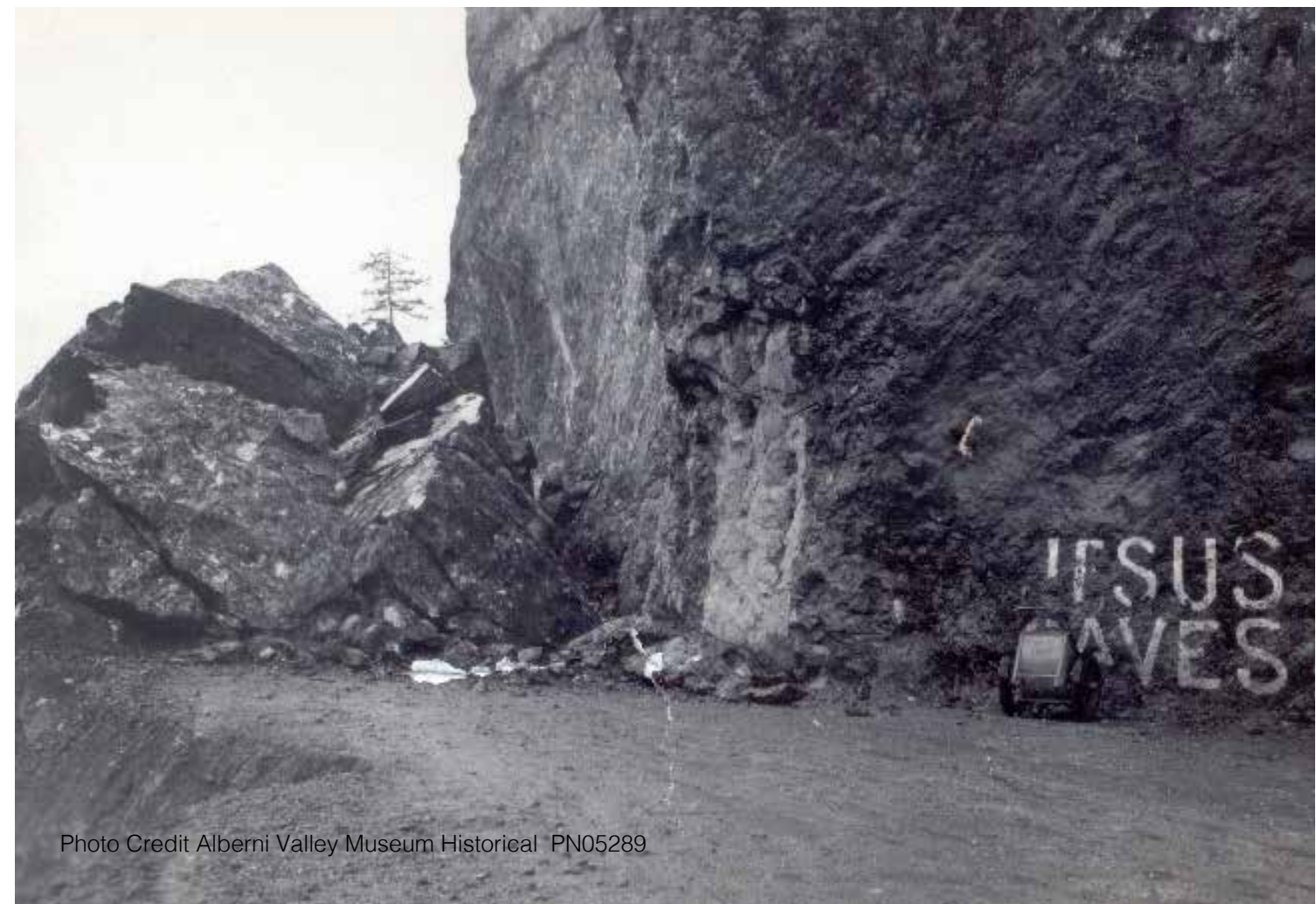
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This meant Angel Rock had to be blasted once more. Humans were not the only ones to have an impact on Angel Rock (although it can be argued that if it had been left alone originally it would likely still stand). On November 14, 1948, hunters on the east side of Cameron Lake heard a massive crash of falling rock. It was later discovered that Angel Rock had fallen. The tunnel that hung over the highway was no more. It had suddenly given away. Many speculated it was related to a large earthquake that hit Vancouver Island in June of 1946.

Although there is no way to prove the two events are connected, it was believed that winter storms and torrential rains contributed, most people believe the earthquake was the final straw. No one was injured in the collapse as it happened at six in the morning when the highway had few travellers. In the end, it lived up to its name – Angel Rock. For many years following, the words “Jesus Saves” over the rockface.

With tonnes of rock on the roadway, the Alberni Valley and beyond were cut off for days. And so the discussion on the need for a second road began and continues to this day. In 1977 the mountain face changed again. The highway department wanted a safer route that had better visibility, and so they blasted off the edges. Although it is safer, now when you drive that section of the highway, it’s hard to believe vehicles once travelled through rock to get to their destination.

Angel Rock made history again last year when a forest fire burned on its face, and Highway 4 was closed for more than two months. Eventually people were allowed to weave their way past Angel Rock when the highway reopened in September 2023. Although the history of Angel Rock is well known and photos still float around of all the stages of Angel Rock, what is a bit more difficult to find is the reason for its name.

Lots of people believe that it was named in honour

of the people who lost their lives along that stretch of highway. Others believed it was because no one was killed when it collapsed. Another story was it got its name because if you drove through without incident it meant there was an angel on the rock protecting you. In a 2003 article in the Alberni Valley Times, it said Angel Rock got its name because a group of church-goers passed through the tunnel unscathed just before it collapsed.

All of these could be true, as no one will ever know for sure where the name originated. It appears the earliest reference to the reason for why it was called Angel Rock is that it resembled the wings of an angel arching over the highway. It is hard not to be impressed by Angel Rock when you drive by. It still stands prominently beside Cameron Lake. There is a small scar of rock on the north side of the road reminding us that there was a time when the two sides connected and for a moment you could dive through a rock.



FROM INDUSTRY TO INNOVATION

In a small city like Port Alberni, where the pace of life has long been dictated by tradition and familiar rhythms, change often arrives quietly. Yet, over time, the subtle shifts in its landscape—whether through the opening of a new café, the renovation of an old building, or the arrival of younger families seeking a different kind of life—signals quiet transformational progress. This evolution, often met with a mix of nostalgia and anticipation, reflects the city’s ability to honor its past while embracing the possibilities of the future. It is in this space that the City looks to resurrect the Somass lands (3500 block of Harbour Road) and transform Port Alberni’s waterfront for the generations to come.

In 2021 Council for the City of Port Alberni took a bold step in acquiring a 43-acre parcel of waterfront property formerly known as the Somass Division sawmill. This industrial site has long stood as a symbol of Port Alberni’s economic driver, but with a shift in the natural resource economy, the site has sat unused for years waiting to be reimagined.

In 2023, after an extensive review and selection process, the City named Matthews West as the development partner for the land. Matthews West has a proven track record in waterfront redevelopment having led Oceanfront Squamish, a multi-million-dollar project that includes a 10-acre park, a waterfront walkway and a “good mix” of residential, commercial and light industrial spaces – all things the City and Council want to see on the reimagined Somass lands.

“After closely following the Matthews West successful waterfront development process in Squamish, we are confident they can bring our collective vision to life,” said Sharie Minions, Mayor of Port Alberni. “Their collaborative approach, combined with careful environmental considerations and thoughtful master planning, will ensure a sustainable and thriving redevelopment project for our vibrant waterfront community.”

Aligning with Council’s vision for the property, Matthews West preliminary concepts tout elements including a boutique hotel; light industrial space; ‘maker’ space; mid-rise multifamily dwellings and townhomes; and office and retail space, among other features. While these concepts are preliminary, the vision will hold true to bringing plenty of park space and connection points to the City’s larger multi-use path and trail system, making the waterfront accessible for all.

“We see tremendous opportunity for growth in Port Alberni due to its attractiveness as a recreational centre that offers natural beauty, lifestyle, and a strong sense of community,” said John Matthews, President of Matthews West Ltd. “The next step is for us to develop a master plan, in consultation with the City, community and neighbouring First Nations, which will guide the final decision as to what gets built and for what purpose,” concluded Mr. Matthews.

While there is still much to do before we see a shovel in the ground, as a contributor to building Port Alberni’s success, you will be asked to shape the city and share your voice on the master plan. To get connected and stay informed, visit www.letsconnectpa.ca and subscribe today.





FAREWELL PHILIPPINE MARS

Article Written by Heather Thomson

For more than a month, Alberni Valley residents were treated to more Martin Mars action as the Philippine Mars hit the water on November 7. Painted her original dark blue of the US Navy, with a star and strip and Mail Air Transport Service markings, she looks quite a bit different than Alberni Valley residents are used to seeing floating on Sproat Lake.

Although she didn't get the fanfare her red and white sister got when she flew to Victoria, the departure of the Philippine Mars marked an important day in history for a lot of people in the Valley – the day the last Martin Mars Water Bomber left town.

Unlike the Hawaii Mars, which is now at the BC Aviation Museum, most British Columbians will never see her again as she is headed to the Pima Air and Space Museum in Arizona. Like her sister, she too is going home, this time to the US where

she first flew. She and the rest of the Martin Mars fleet were built for the US Navy to serve in the Second World War.

The Mars fleet was built between 1942 and 1947, originally called the Martin JRM Mars and meant to be patrol bombers. This job soon became obsolete, and they were converted into transport aircraft. The name came from the fact that the floating fighting boats were built by the Martin Company for the US Navy. They were designed to carry cargo between Hawaii and the Pacific Islands. When the Second World War ended, the planes went to join the efforts in the Korean War. There they were for medical air-transport lifts between Hawaii and California. They also moved cargo between California and Hawaii.

The Mars fleet faced many setbacks on its way to supporting the US Navy. Its first flight was delayed because of a fire in one of the engines during ground runs. For more than a year, after that, the planes carried out test flights. The Navy was happy with what they saw and ordered 20 of the

aircraft. This was later cut back to only five with the end of the Second World War. The first one off the production line in 1945 was the Hawaii Mars. Sadly, the original Hawaii Mars was lost shortly after it first took flight in an accident on the Chesapeake Bay.

Production of the planes continued, and in the end there would be Marianas Mars, Philippine Mars, Marshall Mars, Caroline Mars, and a second Hawaii Mars. The Caroline was the last one made, and it featured a more powerful engine and a higher maximum weight. This led her to set a new world passenger load record when she carried 269 people from San Diego to San Francisco in 1949.

In 1950, the Marshall Mars was lost near Hawaii because of an engine fire. The remaining four planes continued to service the route between San Francisco to Honolulu until 1956 when they were decommissioned. After their relatively short career in the US Navy, they got a new gig in

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1959. A BC forestry consortium bought them and converted them to water bombers to fight forest fires. The planes flew to Fairey Aviation in Victoria, and the conversion process began.

For two of the planes, their career in firefighting was short-lived. The Marianas Mars crashed in June of 1961, and the Caroline Mars was damaged beyond repair in a typhoon in 1962. The Hawaii Mars and Philippine Mars entered service fighting fire the following year in 1962. The planes had called Port Alberni home for many years, so it was good news when Coulson Aviation bought the planes in 2007. They continued to serve the province and beyond for many years. The Philippine retired in 2012 as she hadn't been used for a long time. The plan was to sell it to the National Naval Aviation Museum in Florida, so she was returned to her dark blue and stars and stripes. More than a decade later, a deal was struck with Pima Air and Space Museum in Tucson Arizona.

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Although she will be at home and Americans will get an opportunity to see the World War II plane, it was difficult to see her go. To many Alberni Valley residents, watching the final flight of a Martin Mars aircraft as it left for good was an emotional moment that will never be forgotten. But if you're ever in Tucson Arizona, the Valley's old friend would probably appreciate a visitor of this area. And so the Port Alberni Maritime Heritage Society was formed. Their goal was to work with the Alberni Valley Museum and Archives and the community to preserve and share the maritime history of this area.

Although the non-profit society operates mainly behind the scenes, it's hard to miss their main attraction – the Port Alberni Maritime Discovery Centre. The centre is located on the waterfront in Port Alberni. It is constructed from an actual coastal lighthouse, and it is like no other museum you will find. It's not alone on the site – just to the left is the Hutcheson Gallery where various exhibits are shown throughout the year. The lighthouse was built in 2001, and the gallery followed four years later.

You can walk down to the lighthouse all year to get a little closer to the water, and, if you're lucky, spot some marine life. It's not unheard of to see whales in the water just off the platform that houses the lighthouse.

Open mainly in the warm tourism season, the picturesque red and white lighthouse offers visitors a peek into the maritime history of the area. Between the centre and the gallery, a number of different displays and exhibits are shared with the public each year. This ranges anywhere from finding out all there is to know about tsunamis and underwater detection of earthquakes to historical shows and even demonstrations on building a dory!

In the summer months, the Maritime Discovery Centre is a true place of discovery as it hosts



youth activities. The fun-filled events are designed to teach youth the history of the area, but sometimes it's in silly ways, like being a pirate for a day.

Earlier this year, the City of Port Alberni announced that the Maritime Discovery Centre was getting a facelift, thanks to funding of \$10,000 from the Alberni Valley Community Forest Corporation. So if you're thinking of booking a tour of the centre in the future, that's good news because the investment will improve your experience. The upgrades, which are estimated to be close to \$85,000 in total, will include new interpretive signs. If you are interested in learning more about the Maritime Heritage Centre, or if you want to book a tour or participate in the summer camps, go to www.portalbernimaritimeheritage.ca for more information.

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REMEMBER WHEN...

A Look Back at the Alberni Valley's Early Days
By Diane Dobson, Dir.,
Alberni District Historical Society (ADHS)

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Fossli Provincial Park

Fossli Park is known for its isolation and natural beauty, willow-lined shores and bulrushes in abundance. It was not always a place to relax and rest from the bustling world. In 1888, the property was included in that purchase by Alfred Faber. The area on the north shore of Stirling Arm where Faber built the family home was not viable for agriculture. Therefore, Faber cleared a 10-acre meadow on the south side of the arm. Here was planted a hayfield and large potato patch. A raft was built to ferry a horse and plow over in the Spring and Fall for planting and harvesting.

Faber named the area Fossli because it reminded him of his fishing trips to Norway while living in England. 'Fossli' is the Norwegian word for 'waterfall in the valley'. When Faber wasn't working the land with others he hired, he enjoyed it with his family. Many Sundays were spent rowing across to Fossli with the children where they played, picked wild flowers and picnicked the day away. So, they did have their share of fun there.

Years later, when Marjorie Faber, as an adult, returned to the valley, she commented, "I wonder if the clover smells as nice in the meadow." She was happy to hear

that Fossli was being destined to become a park. Its destiny could well have been different had it not been for world events.

Apparently, a decade after the end of WWI, a Dr. and Mrs. Charles B. Cooper of Honolulu and owner of Arbutus Island (Vanderbilt Island) bought the land. Their intention was to create a private country club complete with a nine-hole golf course. The stock market crash of 1929 changed the fortunes of the Coopers and these plans were trashed - many would say fortuitously.

In the late 1930's, F.C. Mannings, Helen Ford's father and president of Sproat Lake Sawmills, purchased the property. In an AV Times article dated September, 1974, Helen notes, "In 1943, my father gave it to me. The lake was quite a different place in those days. The few of us living there used the lake as a highway rather than just a place to have fun as it is now."

Helen had a small cabin built then, in 1951, it was enlarged to a 5-room cottage. "No one lived on Stirling Arm or on Two Rivers Arm. It was a very quiet spot. I would go by boat to the old store and post office that was where the Flying Tankers are stationed now. I suppose it was isolated but never lonely for I had streams of visitors," says Helen.

Fossli was used by Helen and husband, Armour as a summer place for years. When Armour retired from his law practice, the couple made arrangements to turn the property over to the provincial government to be designated as a park. It was designated as such in 1974.

Fossli Provincial Park remains a hidden jewel, one of the valley's treasures.

The 130-acre park is accessed by boat or by a 30-minute walk from the Stirling Arm Mainline, a Forest Service road. Within the park, a beautiful 30-minute trail meanders through second growth forest and past a waterfall, leading to a pebble beach where one can enjoy views of the lake.

With great appreciation to Helen and Armour Ford for their philanthropy, generosity and foresight. We are all the richer.

* For more information on the park's location, amenities, etc., Google Fossli Provincial Park.

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In October 2004, hundreds of people gathered for the unveiling of the Alberni Valley's first Welcoming figure. Nuuchii, which means mountain, is the male welcoming figure. He faces east up Johnston, welcoming people who come by land. The figure was carved by Rod Sayers, Cecil Dawson, and Doug David over a four-month period. Although the Hupacasath First Nations raised the figure, the base of Nuuchii is made up of 14 stones, each one representing one of the Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations.

Nuuchii was the first Hupacasath pole carved in more than 75 years and, in May 2005 was joined by a female welcoming figure facing the mouth of the Somass River, welcoming people who arrive to the Valley by boat. The female figure, called River Princess, was carved by Rod Sayers and Cecil Dawson out of a red cedar log selected shortly after the male figure was raised in the fall.

Judith Sayers, chief councillor for Hupacasath at the time, told the Ha-shilth-sa paper the two figures serve as a reminder to the millions of visitors that pass by every year, that this is Nuu-chah-nulth territory and that their people remain involved in the things that happen in their territory.

To the left of the Welcoming Figures lies the Whaler's Canoe Exhibit. The large carving depicts a proud history of the Nuu-chah-nulth people. The Nuu-chah-nulth Whaling Canoe sculpture was carved out of yellow cedar and was originally housed in the Royal British Columbia Museum in Victoria. It is a tribute to the strong connection between the Nuu-chah-nulth people and the sea. They were known to be great whalers, and this life-sized carving depicts the strength and ferocity of the whalers. They headed out to the open ocean in search of whales in a canoe with only spears and wooden tools. They worked together to hunt some of the largest mammals in the world. The monument is permanently housed in a small shelter at the bottom of Johnston Road and serves as a reminder that, although whaling is no longer a practice among Nuu-chah-nulth, it was once a strong tradition.



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GETTING TO KNOW THE NEIGHBOURS; RACCOONS

Article Submitted By Lesley Fox, Fur-Bearers

Often referred to as masked bandits or “trash pandas,” raccoons are found throughout Port Alberni. Despite their reputation for causing trouble, raccoons are quite intelligent and clever problem solvers, and the areas they visit can benefit from their activities.

Who Are Raccoons?

The scientific name for raccoons is *Procyon lotor*, which translates to before-dog (*Procyon*) washer (*lotor*), reflecting their habit of feeling their food under water. The common name, raccoon, is taken from the Algonquin word *arakun*, which means “he who scratches with his hands”.

Raccoons have very special sensitive hands. Each paw has five fingers that help them grab things, turn knobs, open latches (including chicken coups), feel objects and solve problems. They are skilled at finding food, especially at night. Though it often appears that raccoons are washing their food by placing it underwater and handling it, they aren’t trying to clean it; by holding their food underwater they receive more tactile information that helps them know what the food (or other object) is.

Another interesting fact about raccoons is that the dark “mask” around their eyes serves a purpose; it helps them see better at night by reducing glare, much like how athletes wear black under their eyes.

Raccoons are also omnivores, so they eat a wide variety of foods. Their diet includes fruits, berries, nuts, seeds, insects, small animals (like frogs, birds, and rodents), and even carrion (dead animals). This makes them nature’s clean-up crew, helping to keep things balanced.

When Problems Happen

While raccoons are amazing animals who play a pivotal role in our island ecosystems, their curious nature and problem-solving skills can sometimes lead to unwanted encounters with humans. Fortunately, there are many solutions that don’t require harming or removing the raccoons themselves.

The first rule to managing raccoon encounters is to remove attractants. Raccoons often come around because they are looking for food or shelter. If they’re spending time in your yard or on your deck, it’s usually because there’s food nearby, such as trash, compost, dirty recycling containers, ponds, farm animals, birdfeeders, outdoor pet food or potentially a neighbour in your area may be intentionally feeding them. While some people enjoy having raccoons around, feeding wildlife can create bigger problems, like raccoons crossing roads or getting

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too close to people or pets. Fed wildlife can also become increasingly demanding and even aggressive. If raccoons have made a den near your home, humane methods can encourage them to leave. Try placing lights or a radio near the den or use apple cider vinegar-soaked rags to create an unpleasant smell without blocking the entrance. If babies are present, wait until they're old enough to leave. Attempting to trap a raccoon can lead to significant injuries or death. Relocating raccoons is also risky, as they may struggle to find food in a new area or face territorial conflicts with other animals. Additionally, this process can separate mothers from their babies, which can lead to abandonment. Should you require assistance, contact a reputable wildlife control operator. Visit AnimalKind.ca for more info.

If you'd like to learn more about raccoons, how to coexist with them, or tips for preventing encounters, you can also visit TheFurBearers.com.

Established in 1953, The Fur-Bearers is a registered Canadian charity. Our full legal name is The Association for the Protection of Fur-Bearing Animals (although we do business as The Fur-Bearers).

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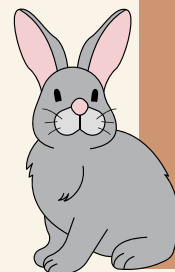
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FIVE TIPS TO HELP WILDLIFE THRIVE THIS WINTER

The temperatures are dropping across Canada and many compassionate people are asking how they can support wildlife through winter. The Fur-Bearers has put together this list to help you find ways to support wildlife without directly feeding – because that can lead to significant issues long term. Let us know which your favourite is!

1. LEAVE THE LEAVES.

A variety of benefits come with allowing fallen leaves to stay in piles on your property, including creating habitat for numerous species of insect and amphibians. These species are important to ecosystems and can also be an overwinter food source for many birds and mammals. Plus, leaves can create a natural mulch that benefits soil health and can reduce weed growth.



2. PLANT NATIVE TREES AND SHRUBS

Including trees and shrubs in your yard that wildlife evolved alongside gives them incredible opportunities for food and shelter through winter. Work with a local nursery or gardening group to identify which plants are ideal for your soil, sun, precipitation, and hardiness zone.

3. DONT DEADHEAD NATIVE PLANTS

While removing the spent flowers of a plant (deadheading) can help generate more growth through the seasons, leaving seedheads intact overwinter not only provides visual interest, but offers a food source to birds and other wildlife. Solidago canadensis (Canadian goldenrod), for example, goes from a golden haven for pollinators to a striking winter plant that birds like Spinus tristis (American goldfinch) love to snack on.



4. MINIMIZE OUTDOOR LIGHTING

Wildlife will often avoid people, even in urban areas, and providing them that opportunity can make a big difference in their ability to thrive through winter. Reducing outdoor lights – particularly decorative lighting that illuminate greenspaces – will make your property more comfortable for wildlife to move through and potentially find habitat within.

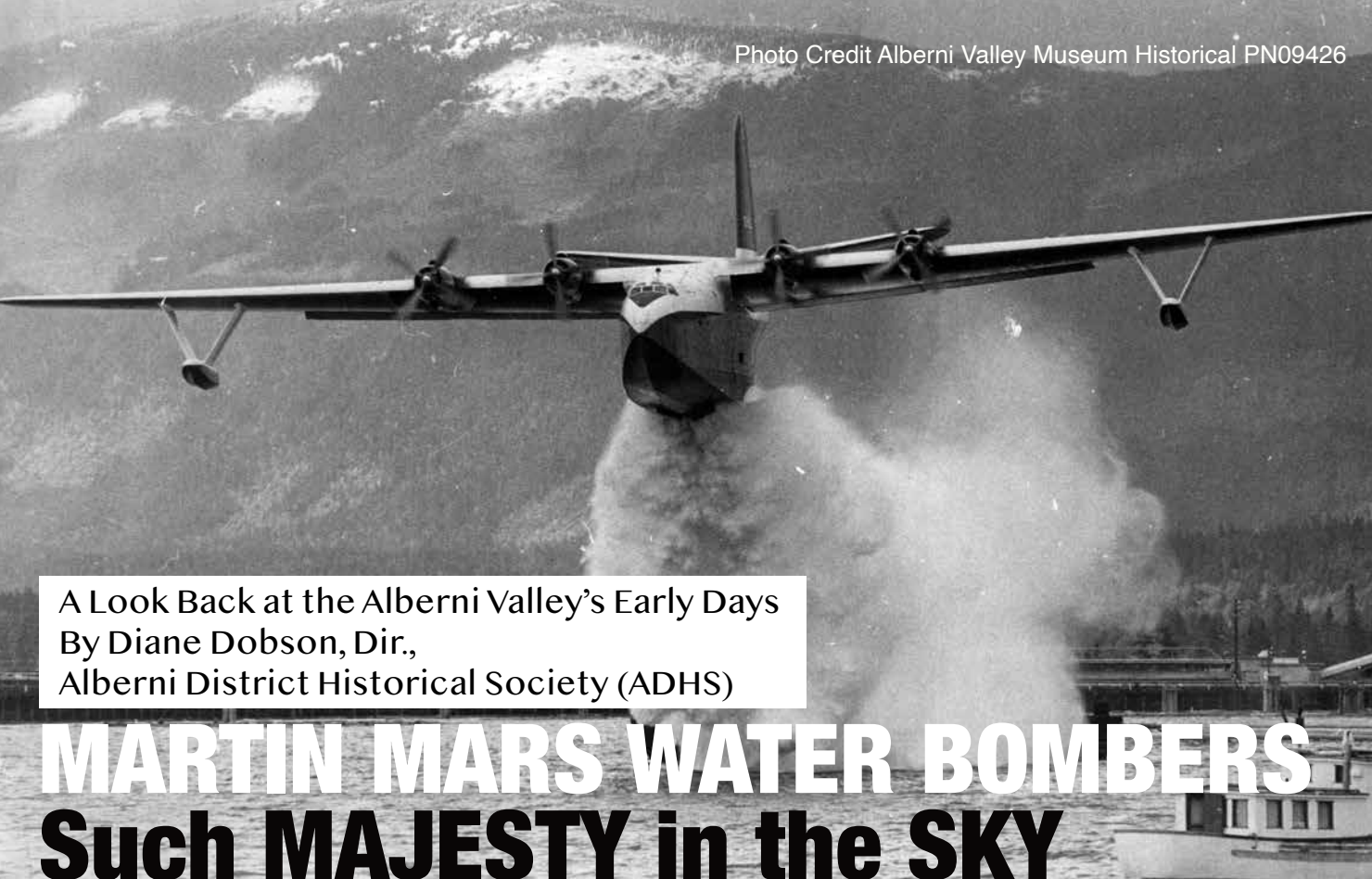
5. CREATING NESTING BOXES

Whether it's for bats, birds, or squirrels, creating a nesting box can offer local wildlife additional habitat and safety from extreme temperatures in winter.



**The
Fur-Bearers**

INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THEFURBEARERS.COM



A Look Back at the Alberni Valley's Early Days
By Diane Dobson, Dir.,
Alberni District Historical Society (ADHS)

MARTIN MARS WATER BOMBERS Such MAJESTY in the SKY

"The nostalgia behind these planes to the people of PA is second to none. No matter where you were or what you were doing, you would stop dead in your tracks to watch them fly overhead. You could recognize that sound from a mile away." (Kaitlyn Johnston)

Forest fire ... flames crackle, smoke billows. The huge red and white water bombers rush through the sky with their liquid cargo, counting the seconds until they unleash the torrent upon the inferno below.

Let's look back on these majestic marvels and learn. It was in 1946 that five Martin Mars aircraft were produced for the US Navy. For the next ten years, they were operated as Air Transport Two out of San Francisco, giving outstanding service and establishing some impressive records. They were, and remain, the biggest flying boats ever built. While in service with the US Navy, the Mars flew a total of 87,000 accident-free hours covering a distance equivalent to 23 round trips to the moon - an amazing achievement!

The five Mars flying boats were retired from service in 1956 and no one expected them to fly again. No one, that is, except a handful of pilots and fire control specialists in British Columbia.

MacMillan Bloedel and other major forestry companies became very interested in the flying tanker idea. In some dry seasons, timber losses from forest fires in BC were enormous. Large land-based aircraft like the DC-7s were not practical because of lack of air strips in the hilly terrain of coastal BC.

Late in 1959, MB took the initiative and, along with other major forestry companies, formed the Forest Industries Flying Tankers Ltd (FIFT). The four remaining Mars (the Navy had lost one) were purchased - almost under the wrecking ball.

Modifications were required, the main one being the installation of a fibreglassed Douglas fir plywood tank in the cargo area. The 6,000 gallon tank had four compartments that could be emptied under the control of the pilot through side doors, individually or all at once.

The base of operations was established on Sproat Lake complete with maintenance shops. Here the flying crew perfected operational techniques and developed the close teamwork so necessary in the variety of conditions they would encounter.

(Below) Photo Credit Alberni Valley Museum Historical PN04832

The "Marianas Mars Flying Tanker" airplane is seen on Sproat Lake with a small cabin on shore and trees in the background. a crewman on the airplane secures it to an anchor buoy.



Of the four Mars aircraft originally purchased, two have been lost. One was destroyed on the ground in a freak hurricane and the other tragically lost, along with her crew, when she struck tree tops after a water drop. The Hawaiian Mars and the Philippine Mars continued on.

Up to the end of the '73 operating season, they had made almost 3,000 drops on 170 fires. Even more significant is the fact that the annual acreage destroyed by fire had been dramatically reduced.

The immense Martin Mars flying tankers with its wing span greater than a Boeing 747's has always been an impressive sight resting on its moorings. But, to see the Mars in flight 100 feet above the ground, dousing flames with tons of liquid, is truly to observe an awesome spectacle.

The airplanes sometimes flew from dawn to dusk fighting fires. Each Mars carried enough fuel to stay in the air for four or five hours.

As soon as the fire call is received, a Gruman Goose amphibian aircraft (known as the "Bird Dog") is dispatched to survey the scene of the fire and establish



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communication with any ground fire fighting crews. The Goose was always flown by a Mars-qualified pilot. As the Martin Mars arrived, the pilot of the Goose was able to give the situation report and lead the Mars to the first drop site. The Mars pilots always tried to get down to an altitude of 100 feet over the fire for the drop.

To bomb a steep hillside, the aircraft is flown straight at the hill. The pilot turns the aircraft sharply at the last possible moment, releasing the load during the turn which causes the water to fly onto the hill. To say it is dangerous work is an understatement. In the FIFT days, under Manager and Chief pilot, Bill Waddington, it took a staff of 30, including the four highly trained pilots, to run the fire fighting operation. It takes a rather special breed of airmen to handle this exacting task. Over and above, they must have the nerveless ability and calm judgment to make rapid decisions while whistling over the tree tops in smoke-filled valleys hemmed in by rocky hills.

In 2007, the two Martin Mars bombers were sold by Timberwest and its subsidiary, FIFT, to the Coulson Group. According to the Legion Magazine Spring 2008 edition, “Two monstrous red and white flying boats are queens here. But that moniker is shattered whenever their four Wright R3350 engines roar to life.”

“They are certainly not Belles of the Ball”, says Wayne Coulson, CEO of the Coulson Group. Indeed not, but those two have been workhorses for more than six decades. 40 years would be considered a lifetime.

By the way, when the planes came up for sale in 2007, of the 25 offers submitted, Coulson’s was the only operational offer. Yes, there was still life in the old girls, but their working days were numbered.

The Philippine Mars was sold and is on display at the Pima Air and Space Museum in Arizona. The Hawaii Martin Mars was last deployed during the summer of 2015 to extinguish wildfires in BC, Alberta, California and Mexico. Next week, the Hawaii Mars is taking its final flight - to the BC Aviation Museum in North Saanich. Here it will be the centerpiece of the new Wildfire Aviation exhibit. Generations to come will be able to learn about this amazing facet of our history. Never again will we see and hear these iconic airplanes in the sky ... but we will always remember them.



*Photo Credit Alberni Valley Museum Historical PN09426
 Circa 1985; The Mars bomber demonstrating on a barge in the Alberni Inlet. The bomber is seen in the centre of the photo. The barge is only partially visible due to the water which is being dropped on it. In the right foreground there is a boat. A long dock is seen in the background and the snow-covered Beaufort Mountains. Demo run for the Somass sawmill’s 50th anniversary. An oil barrel was set on fire on top of a barge for demonstration purposes.*

*Photo Credit Alberni Valley Museum Historical PN13603
 Circa 1989; Waterbomber test flight at Sproat Lake. One large MARS bomber sits on top of water, while another bomber flies overhead and drops water behind it.*



Photo Credit Alberni Valley Museum Historical PN13603

*(Below)
 Photo Credit Alberni Valley Museum Historical PN20798.
 Photo taken after 1963. First flight of Martin Mars waterbomber. Bomber is dumping water on Sproat Lake. The bomber base is also in the photo. Bottom half of the image is water, the top half is tree covered land. The bomber base is just left of centre at the water’s edge and the plane is flying just right of centre with a plume of water extending from the plane towards the right side of the photo.*



GROWING TOGETHER

When we first started our Forest walks with Saplings teachers and children, there was much apprehension and wonderings about what the Forest walks would be like. We wondered: how will the children know when to stop, and where? How will they listen to us? How will they not run away? What if we see bears? This was a new notion to go on long Forest walks, and there were questions from both children, teachers and families.

All these questions were valid. The solutions we came up with were to travel as a group and start Forest walks two to three times a week, each for a short time. We felt these short exposures would help us all relax and give everyone the time and space to feel comfortable, and become acquainted with the environment, and with each other in a new setting. What excited us most was that the toddlers were going on forest walks multiple times a week as well! What also grew our confidence was that any previous behavioral issues were lessening quickly when we were outdoors. We wondered why. At the center we strive to incorporate inclusivity, just as the BC Early Learning Framework suggests, which is to learn alongside the child, and that “educators work in relationship children, and strive to ensure children feel safe, confident, motivated, and listened to” (BC Early Learning Framework, pg. 18).

Fast Forward to six months later, both the toddler room and the 3-5 room are now walking five times a week into the forest! Instead of walking fast with a purpose to get from Point A to Point B, we are slowly walking to the destinations that the children choose. New trails are discovered, and favorite places are frequently visited. As Ann Pelo and Margie Carter describe in their beautiful book, *From Teaching to Thinking: A Pedagogy for Reimagining our Work*, they describe the beauty and importance of walking alongside the children. Instead of rushing to our end point, we follow Pelo and Carter’s philosophy of learning with the children. We, the teachers, do not have all the answers, and there is such importance and beauty in that we excitedly learn alongside the children, and celebrate facts together. Instead of rushing, we are touching and noticing the different textures of tree bark, and asking questions, Why do they feel different? How do trees become paper? How do they help animals? Living and non-living are both highly regarded, and viewed with respect. Rocks and minerals are held lovingly, and with the help of local specialists and professionals, we are able to identify their names, and how long they may have been in this area for.

There are two forests we frequently visit, and the children often choose which one to visit. These forest walks seem to result in a great release of energy and any tension. However, it is also has become a place of great comfort to children and teachers alike.

Before we enter the forests, we howl like wolves, to create a pact mentality for ourselves and for the forest. In some cases, we have heard bears growl back as a respectful warning, and to which we turn around and give it space. There are an abundance of bears in Port Alberni, and we could not believe the beautiful, respectful relationship that was forming between humans and wild animals.

In order to have a smooth program, we work hard to collaborate as a team and to have Open Listening. As Kumi Kato in her article, *Listening: Research as an Act of Mindfulness*, she explains that the word kiku, which means to listen, “is an act of “appreciating something with all our sharpened senses”” (Pg. 111). We strive to accept our mistakes, and know that they will happen, but to also strive to fully listen to fellow teachers and children, and all their glorious philosophies and ideas.

We are constantly in awe of what we come across: streams as deep as the children’s hips, and some children rushing into the river with utter glee and confidence. We

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also have come across large tracks in the mud and we stop to observe and then investigate. To feel more connected, we pull in from willing community members wanting to add to our center, such as visits from geologists and conservation officers. We also pull in from Robin Wall Kimmerer's philosophy from Braiding Sweetgrass, where she describes how she asks the forest if she can take an item from the forest and return it, or asks a flower if she can cut it, then thanking them.

Landmarks in the forest have been a strong touchpoint for the children and educators to rely on. The children from both rooms will often name landmarks, where they stop and wait for everyone to join on our hikes. Some landmarks such as a wooden chair cut out of a log,

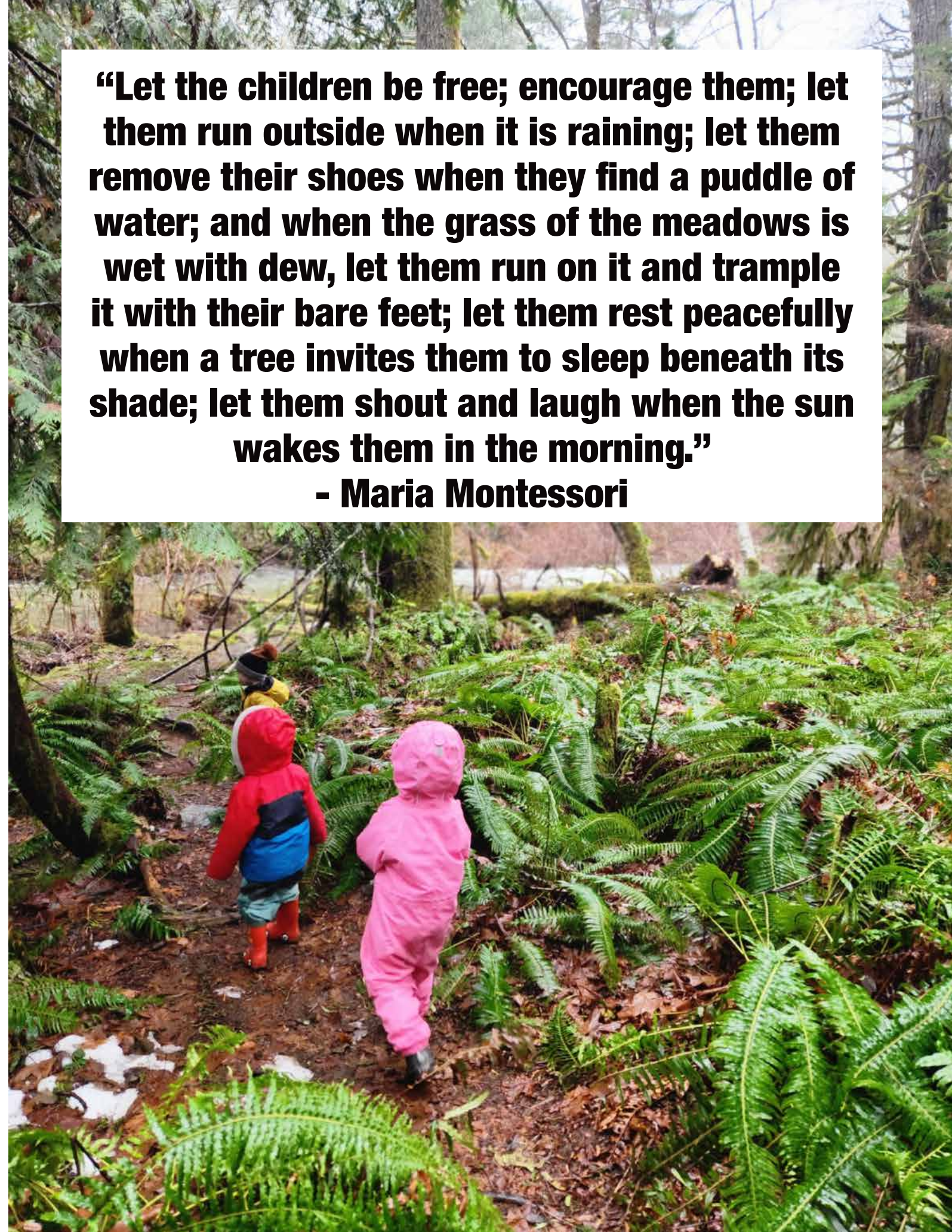
The Big Chair; or steps at the bridge, which the children call Bridge Steps. Or large concrete parking blocks where the forest and road connect, which the children call Sit Fit. The child is respected in our center, from their individual personality, strengths to their ideas, as are the educator's individual personality, strengths and ideas. We strive to work together cohesively to ensure all bodies, whether young or more mature, to ensure that they feel connected, heard and validated. This is most seen when some educators are not used to the outdoors or our Outdoor philosophy. When teachers first start with us, some teachers are overly-cautious. However, they are given the respect, time and space to unravel their thoughts, questions and concerns at their own speed, which allows their confidence to grow naturally. Over time, we have seen a couple very nervous educators become very strong, confident and relaxed on our outdoor hikes.

After six months of exploring the forests, our hikes for the children in the 3-5 room are now upwards of four hours each time! The toddlers are not far behind, with hikes up to three hours a day, which often equals 4.5kms! In large open fields, shoes come off, socks pulled off and feet are running to the streams. On our long hikes, mushrooms, ferns and trees are carefully being studied, identified and respected. As the BC Early Learning Framework suggests, we strive to bring the children into rich, beautiful spaces to inspire their learning. We are not only watching the environment change and grow, we are watching one another change, grow and flourish.

Article Submitted by Miranda Tanner, AV Sapplings Childcare

“Let the children be free; encourage them; let them run outside when it is raining; let them remove their shoes when they find a puddle of water; and when the grass of the meadows is wet with dew, let them run on it and trample it with their bare feet; let them rest peacefully when a tree invites them to sleep beneath its shade; let them shout and laugh when the sun wakes them in the morning.”

- Maria Montessori





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Thank You Port Alberni

From all of us at Funtastic "Building a Better Community Through Sport" On behalf of our board members, Debbie Reid, Tanya Nagel, Sharon Wutke, Paula Sogge, Mike O'Donovan, Music Director Jason Samson, and myself....We would like to THANK the following people and our sponsors for spending time with us this past July long weekend! You are all awesome, and we Love your commitment to Funtastic & our community!!

The Port Alberni Funtastic Sports Society hosted 80 teams this year and the planning for The 35th Annual Okee Dokee Slo-pitch Tournament is well underway!! October 19th, we held our annual Charity Event where we gave away 100% of the profits generated at this year's Tournament & Funtastic/Alberni Music Festival.

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The Port Alberni Funtastic Sports Society held its annual charity event October 19th where all the funds raised at this year's July Long weekend Okee Dokee Slo-Pitch Tournament & Music Festival were donated to sports, music, and quality of life groups. This year \$37,000.00 was shared between The Zattzoo Music Project, Read & Feed Breakfast Program, The Backpack Program, AV Minor Hockey, John Howitt School Sports, The Navy League, U-19 Ladies Fastpitch, ADSS Athletic Fund, Community 1st Aid Trailer, PA Scouts, AV Junior Baseball, PA Special Olympics, Youth Basketball Program, PA Kinsmen, Toy Run, Pathways, and CMHA Port Alberni. We have an application process in place where groups can apply for funds raised. We always have requests exceeding the amount we have to donate, but the board members try their best to help everyone who meets the criteria! In 2013 it was all about donating to sports and music groups, but lately the shift has moved towards quality-of-life groups and helping those in need! Since 2013 Funtastic Alberni has donated just over \$265,000.00 to various groups in the Valley. 2024 was the "Year of the Volunteer" and we would like to thank each and everyone who volunteers not only at Funtastic/Okee Dokee, but all the amazing events that take place in Port Alberni annually. The 2024 Wayne Demoskoff Volunteer of the Year trophy was awarded to Jim Groenendyk. Jim is a 2-time winner, and he also won Toy Run VOTY last year. He went over and above this year donating his time. Mike Watt won the West Coast Getaway Package that was put together by some of our sponsors. It was a random draw that our volunteers entered in. It consisted of a 2 night stay at the Black Rock Resort & 3 gift certificates to restaurants in Ucluelet as well. The 35th Annual Okee Dokee Slo-Pitch Tournament & Funtastic Music Festival dates are set for June 28th-30th/2025. On behalf of our board of directors thank you to all our sponsors, volunteers, players, & fans for supporting our event year in, and year out! Check us out at www.funtasticalberni.com or find us on FB!



WHAT IS GOING ON AT THE FARM in 2025?

January - February check in for a sweet experience 'Maple Syrup Tapping'

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Navigating Senior Resizing and Downsizing: A Seamless Transition with Rosanne Doiron, SRES®



Life is full of changes, and as we move through different stages, our housing needs often evolve. For many, the idea of downsizing or resizing comes with mixed emotions—there’s excitement about simplifying life, but also apprehension about the challenges of moving and letting go of long-held possessions. My name is Rosanne Doiron, and I am a Realtor with REMAX Mid-Island Realty, as well as a proud Seniors Real Estate Specialist® (SRES®). My mission is to ensure that your downsizing or resizing experience is as smooth and seamless as possible, regardless of your age or stage in life.

Although my SRES® certification provides me with specialized knowledge to assist seniors, I believe that everyone can benefit from the skills I bring to the table. Whether you’re preparing for retirement, looking for a more manageable home, or simply seeking a fresh start, my approach is designed to take the stress out of the process, allowing you to focus on the exciting possibilities ahead.

Understanding Resizing and Downsizing
Downsizing or resizing isn’t just about moving into a smaller space—it’s about making thoughtful decisions that align with your lifestyle. Whether you’re looking to reduce the upkeep of a larger home or are seeking a living space that better suits your physical needs, resizing can bring more freedom and peace of mind. This transition allows you to move into a home that feels right for you—whether it’s a cozy condo, a townhome with amenities, or a rental that offers more flexibility.

For many seniors, resizing also means letting go of possessions that have been accumulated over decades. This can be emotionally challenging, which is why having a plan in place is key. The process of sorting through treasured items, deciding what to keep, and determining what to donate, sell, or dispose of can feel overwhelming. My team and I are here to help every step of the way, ensuring that this process is handled with care, respect, and efficiency.



Free Consultation: Your Personalized Roadmap
The first step in any successful downsizing or resizing journey is creating a plan that fits your unique situation. I offer a free consultation to help you understand the road ahead, from start to finish. During this consultation, we’ll discuss your specific needs and goals. Whether you’re looking to move into a smaller space, relocate closer to family, or transition to a new community, we’ll develop a plan tailored to you.

One of the biggest hurdles people face when considering downsizing is the question of what to do with their belongings. Over the years, we accumulate not only possessions but memories, and deciding what to let go of can be difficult. During our consultation, we’ll help you prioritize the items that matter most and create a plan for the rest. Whether it’s donating to charity, selling through estate sales, or responsibly disposing of items, my team and I have the resources to help make the process as easy and stress-free as possible.

Organizing and Decluttering: A Compassionate Approach
As part of our full-service approach, my team and I offer help in organizing and decluttering your home. This includes sorting through your possessions, helping you decide what to keep, and finding new homes for items you no longer need. We understand that this can be a deeply emotional process, which is why we approach every project with empathy and understanding.

Whether you’re downsizing due to retirement, health changes, or simply wanting a simpler lifestyle, we’re here to help you manage the details. By the end of the process, your home will feel lighter, more organized, and ready to make the transition to the next chapter.

Preparing Your Home for Sale: Trusted Local Resources
One of the most important aspects of downsizing or resizing is ensuring your current home is market-ready. I have an extensive network of local tradespeople who can assist with any necessary home repairs or improvements before listing your property. From landscaping and yard work to painting, minor repairs, or deep cleaning, my trusted team is here to take care of the details.

I also provide expert guidance on how to stage your home to attract potential buyers. This can include decluttering, making minor upgrades, or simply enhancing curb appeal. The goal is to maximize your home’s value while making the process as easy for you as possible. By taking care of the preparation work, we ensure that your home is



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Moving and Relocating: Helping You Every Step of the Way

Moving can be one of the most stressful parts of downsizing, but with the right support, it doesn't have to be. Once your home is sold, my team can help guide you through the process of finding your next home. Whether you're looking to buy, rent, or relocate to a senior community, I can help you explore all your options.

Additionally, we provide resources for moving and relocating, connecting you with trusted moving companies and helping you coordinate every aspect of your move. From packing up your belongings to settling into your new space, we're here to ensure that the transition is as smooth as possible.

Financial Guidance for Seniors: Making Informed Decisions

For seniors, downsizing often involves financial considerations, such as managing the sale of a home, budgeting for future housing, or understanding the tax implications of a move. As a Seniors Real Estate Specialist®, I can provide direction in senior financial care, offering resources and guidance to help you make informed decisions about your next steps. Whether you're planning to invest in a new home, considering rental options, or looking into senior living communities, I can help you navigate the financial aspects of your journey with confidence.

A Seamless, Stress-Free Experience

At the heart of my work is the belief that downsizing or resizing should be an empowering experience, not a stressful one. By working with a Realtor who specializes in senior transitions, you gain access to a wealth of knowledge, resources, and support tailored to your unique needs. My goal is to provide a seamless, stress-free experience, from the moment we start planning your journey to the day you settle into your new home.

Whether you're just beginning to consider downsizing or are ready to take the next steps, I'm here to help. My team and I are committed to providing compassionate, expert guidance to ensure that your transition is as smooth as possible. If you're ready to explore the possibilities of downsizing or resizing, please reach out for a free consultation. Together, we can create a plan that aligns with your goals and helps you move forward with confidence.

Rosanne Doiron, Realtor®
Seniors Real Estate Specialist® (SRES®)
REMAX Mid-Island Realty



ADC Community Investment Fund

The Alberni District Co-op has been supporting its community since its incorporation in 1928! We care about the communities where we live, work and play. For nearly 100yrs we have stayed locally invested and community minded. We strive to support as many local events and organizations as possible through our local sponsorship programs. In 2022, we were elated to introduce our ADC Community Investment Fund in addition to our Community Donation and Sponsorship Program to support larger community programs and organizations

that provide a necessary service in improving the quality of life within our community. Since 2022 the ADC Community Investment Fund has provided over \$95,000 to organizations benefiting the Alberni Valley Community. The ADC Community Investment Fund opens once a year to applicants to apply for their upcoming initiatives. The ADC Community Investment Fund opens for submissions February 2025. If your community organization is planning a large project, please ensure to check out the requirements on our website and apply online! We look forward to seeing what 2025 holds for organizations and their upcoming projects.



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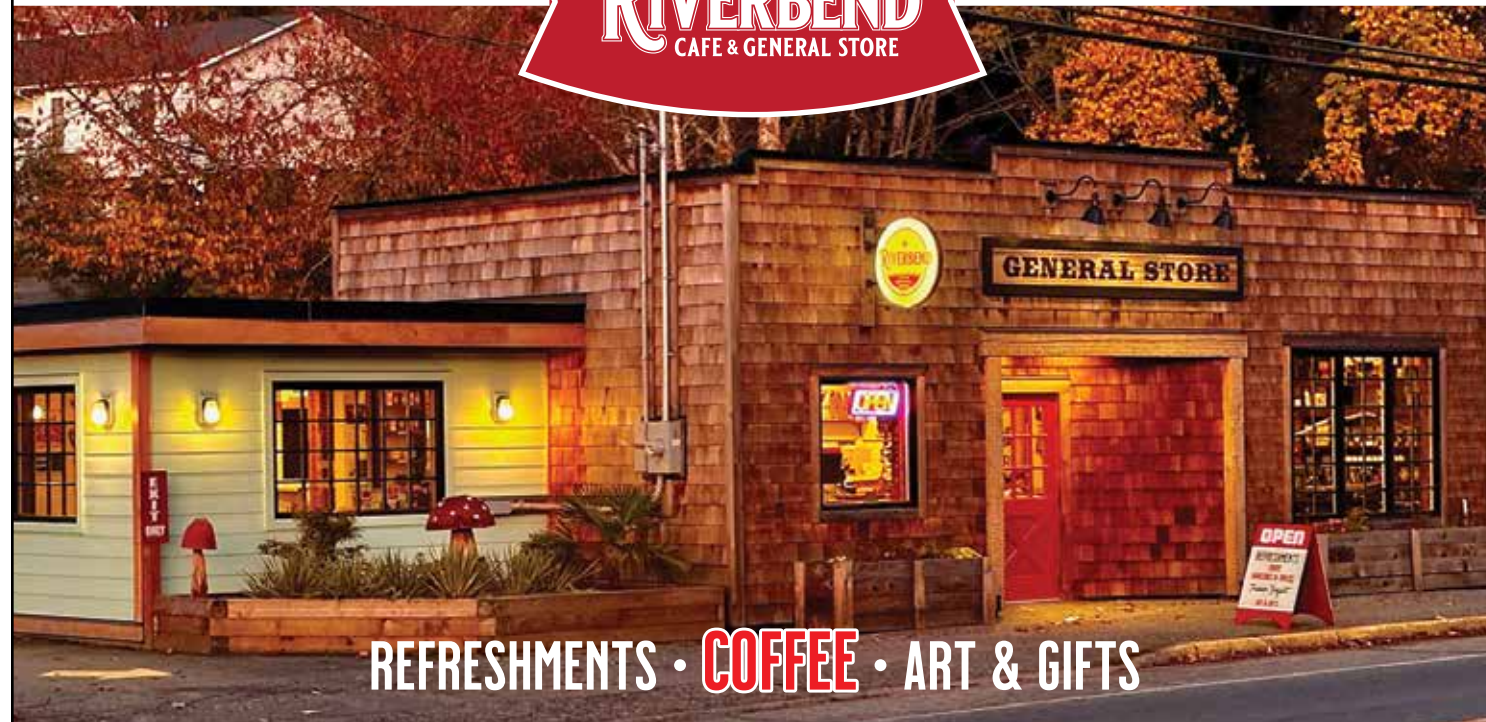
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