

50 Years - 50 Faces: December

"I love Cheakamus Centre because it lets me learn, have fun and play in a big playground with my classmates. I feel happy and free when I am outside. I have gone once to the Bighouse and 2 times to Outdoor School. It was a great experience each time and I always felt part of the group.

I am thankful to everyone for making the activities adapted and inclusive so that I could take part in all of them with my classmates. I was grateful to have my mom come with me on my trips, so I felt safe and comfortable in the cabins overnight. I have many special memories – I got to be in a kayak and learn to row, make a shelter, learn about the animals, make apple juice, go on nature walks, make bannock but my favorite one was when Chef Wade made me a surprise cupcake for my birthday and everyone sang "Happy Birthday" to me.

THANK YOU to all the staff at Cheakamus Centre for all your support and kindness so that I could participate in the programs!"

Saajin Mann, Grade 7 Student, Canyon Heights Elementary School



"I never realized how much of an impact Outdoor School (ODS) had on me until reflecting now. It was there that I began developing a curiosity about how humans interact with the environment, how we depend on ecosystem services, and how our actions can have a detrimental impact and I began thinking about how I could pursue this relationship as a career. I graduated SFU with an undergrad in environmental geography, and have been working in sustainability, focusing on behavior change, outreach & engagement, energy conservation and waste management for a number of years.

I was lucky enough to attend the Bighouse in grade 2, where my Mom was also one of our chaperones. I remember learning how to make bannock over the fire (the first attempts were always raw) and preparing soup with hot stones – which always ended up a bit gritty!

Continued...

CHEAKAMUS CENTRE

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We then went to ODS in grade 3 (I named myself “Piglet”), and again in grade 6 (becoming “Tinkerbell”). I remember farm studies fondly as a young kid, but most of my memories are from the latter time. Highlights were definitely playing Predator Prey in the big field, navigating the obstacle course (see picture), calling ‘who cooks for you’ to get responses from owls in the forest at night, hypnotizing chickens (see picture), holding baby goats (see picture), and trying to guess the counsellors’ real names. I also miss the soup! The cooks always outdid themselves. I learned to crumble crackers into my soup at ODS; I still do it today.

Our grade 6 counsellor also taught my cabin how to French braid. We spent way too much time learning how to do each other’s hair, and most of our photos on the grade 6 trip involve the same hairstyle - but it’s a skill I’m happy to still have!

The transition to high school was made easier by familiar faces I met at ODS. I’m still friends with some of these people today. I then became a counsellor and had the privilege of teaching the salmon study. I loved being in the river holding the spawning salmon with kids who had rarely seen fish up close. I ended up working at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in high school as a result of my ichthyology interests!

Not only was I fortunate enough to attend, but my Dad was also heavily involved in Outdoor school as a teacher in SD44 and remains friends with the people he met at ODS. My sister and my husband also attended as students, and both went on to become counsellors. I am thrilled that ODS is still part of students’ journeys and think it is an invaluable educational experience that truly has lifelong impacts. I cannot say enough positive things about it and can’t wait to hear about the next 50 years!”

Marina Van Driel, Program Coordinator, Campus Sustainability, Simon Fraser University; former ODS student and counsellor



50 Years - 50 Faces: November

An interview conducted with Hunter Fullerton, age 6, and Zeya Fullerton, age 11 who reside on site at Cheakamus Centre. They are the daughters of Cheakamus Centre's Facilities and Operations Manager, Jason Fullerton and Cheakamus Centre's Cultural Support Worker, Aura Lewis.

What is your favourite part about living on site at Cheakamus Centre?

Zeya: "It is exciting to experience first-hand the animals, forest and especially the cultural things on site."

Hunter: "All the animals! So lucky to hang out with the animals everyday and hold the babies. And I love the longhouse!"

How would you describe Cheakamus Centre?

Zeya: "A place for kids to come learn about culture and animals in a way they would rarely experience."

Hunter: "It's an amazing place to explore, visit the animals, and go inside a longhouse."

What does Cheakamus Centre mean to you?

Zeya: "It's my home and a beautiful place to live!"

Hunter: "It's important that we teach people about First Nations traditions and let people visit fun animals."

What is one thing that you've learned directly related to living on site at Cheakamus Centre?

Zeya: "That nature is truly amazing and inspiring; and being able to learn more about indigenous people in their environment."

Hunter: "To be cautious and respectful of nature."



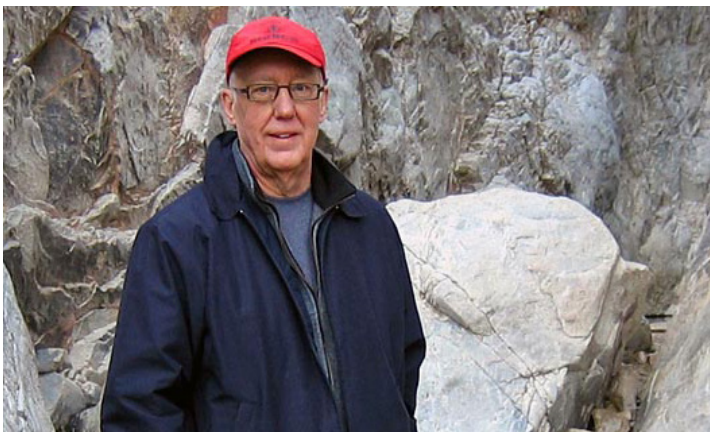
50 Years - 50 Faces: November

Long-toed Salamander **(*Ambystoma macrodactylum*)**

Long-toed salamanders are medium sized amphibians, growing up to 8 to 12 cm in size. As their name suggest, the long-toed salamanders have long toes. They have one long toe (the fourth toe) on their back feet, giving them their name. In Canada, there is 3 subspecies of these Amphibians: the eastern, central and western long toed salamanders. They are usually black or dark colored with a green to yellow dorsal stripe and are spotted with white flecks and have a brown colored belly.

Learn more:

www.amphibians.ca/long-toed-salamander/



“Education in, for, and about the environment is an essential core element of a 21st Century Education. The focus in environmental education curricula should be on enriching the experiences and thinking of students across an entire spectrum of environments--built and natural, from the tiny to the cosmic and on developing students’ understandings that they ARE environments.”

**Milt McLaren, Ph.D., Emeritus Professor of Education,
Simon Fraser University; Past Outdoor School
Advisory Committee member**



Wintering Bald Eagle **(*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)**

According to the Squamish Environment Society’s Annual Winter Bald Eagle Count, in 1994, the Squamish Valley was home to 3,769 bald eagles - a world record! Since the 1994 record, the average number of eagles counted in the Squamish Valley is approximately 1,300. In January 2019, there were 1,157 Eagles counted during the Annual Brackendale Winter Eagle Count. The annual count occurs on the first first Sunday after New Year’s Day. Let’s see how many are counted for 2020!

Learn more:

www.cheakamuscentre.ca/blog/2018/wintering-bald-eagles

50 Years - 50 Faces: November

"I first went to outdoor school in 2005 as a grade 6 student. It was my first-time leaving home for a week to be with my friends in the outdoors. I vividly remember observing spawning salmon and seeing the bald eagles swoop in to feast on their carcass. The circle of life was made apparent to me in a real way at that time.

Outdoor school became an important motivator to continue to pursue outdoor activities. And ultimately, I was able to achieve the Canada Cord, the highest award in Pathfinders in Girl Guides.

In May 2012, I came back as a counsellor with my camp name "Mika". It was my own full circle with the outdoor school. And a way to give back to an important childhood chapter of my life."

Lauren Lee, former student and high school Outdoor School program Counsellor



"Cheakamus Centre is the jewel of North Vancouver School District! Both my kids have gone for Outdoor School & Bighouse and my daughter went for the Handsworth Grade 8 Retreat. They both loved their experiences there. I have gone there many times including the Open Houses and treasure each visit. It is a beautiful natural playground that is an amazing learning space for all students. The memories from their adventures are priceless and when they return home, they are more confident, independent and grown as individuals. It is the experience we want every student to be fortunate to have."

Kulvir Mann, North Vancouver School District School Board Trustee



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"Cheakamus Centre is unique and special to me because of the generosity of generations of Skwxwú7mesh and Lil'wat Nation members who share their knowledge, love of place and kindness with all of us who visit and work there. There are so many fantastic teachers, counsellors, students and staff engaged in experiential environmental learning in a phenomenal forest and river setting."

Kate "Coho" Keogh, Teacher, Holy Trinity; Previous Vice Principal, Cheakamus Centre (2008-2017)

A Special Teacher and Friend of Cheakamus

For nearly a decade, Kate Keogh was the Vice Principal and the tireless champion of Indigenous education programs at Cheakamus Centre. Through her influential leadership, Kate championed the integration of Indigenous perspectives within environmental educational offerings at the Centre. Working in collaboration with Squamish Elders, the longhouse programming provides students with a traditional communal living experience rooted in a sense of community and partnership between cultures. Kate embodies the cornerstones of the longhouse teachings – respect for all people, the important role of elders in our society, and living in harmony with the seasons. She has a deep appreciation of Indigenous knowledges and traditional ways of learning to maintain healthy and collaborative communities. It is because of her unwavering dedication to her practice that thousands of children, parent volunteers, and teachers have gained a culturally authentic respect for the natural world supporting our country's movement towards reconciliation and environmental advocacy through meaningful engagement.

As Vice Principal, Kate's role at Cheakamus Centre included program instruction, designing curriculum and liaising with visiting staff and administrators. She used her "outdoor classroom" to bridge gaps between students, foster a sense of group unity, and create an atmosphere in which trust and exploration can flourish. With Kate's great love for small nature moments, students in her care gained a deeper understanding of the natural world and their place within it.

Kate's passion and career in environmental education began at an early age in Alberta, continued to the foothills outside Calgary and to a small island in Howe Sound. Now as a classroom teacher in Vancouver, she enjoys incorporating her love of environmental education into her lessons for all students. Kate is a remarkable and inspiring individual whose dedication to her students, her profession, and her community makes her an outstanding professional, mentor, teacher and respected leader amongst her colleagues.

We are honoured to recognize Kate as one of our special 50 Faces!



www.cheakamuscentre.ca

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“Carrying my overstuffed backpack and feeling terrified, my parents shipped me off to summer camp at the age of eight. Upon arrival, I inspected the camp facilities, which proved to be rustic. My sleeping cabin was a basic wooden structure filled only with a few bunk beds. Where were the lights and toilets? The camp’s electricity was provided by a generator, which would automatically turn off at 9:30pm leaving all of the new campers whimpering in the dark. I was also convinced that my cabin was geographically the furthest from the washroom building. Frightened of the dark, unfamiliar surroundings and too embarrassed to wake my counselor, I wet my bed on the first night. After a rocky start, I began to settle in to camp life. It was here that I was first introduced to a variety of outdoor activities including hiking, backpacking and canoeing. I greatly enjoyed the games of Capture the Flag in the forest surrounding the camp. I would also take pleasure in gathering around a campfire sharing stories, skits and songs in the evenings. I even conquered my fear of going to the washroom alone at night...almost!



My first experience overnight tripping was also at camp. Ten eight-year old campers and two camp counselors crowded into a whaling boat for the voyage. I remember feeling elated as the waves bobbed us over to our destination on the Sechelt Peninsula, a few hours from camp. During the excursion, I experienced many firsts: I would feel seasick, develop blisters, get a sunburn, become dehydrated, eat chocolate macaroni, get eaten alive by mosquitoes, go to the washroom in the woods, and sleep under a tarp with my group. My time at camp inspired personal growth through shared experiences. Through daily events, I developed the self-confidence that comes with truly being relied upon to help others. A sense of connectedness was fostered through activities that required us to work cooperatively, trust each other, and exercise compassion for one another. In addition, the ethos of caring for the environment was also created as campers and staff would engage in active service projects around the site. An appreciation of diversity was developed as we utilized our individual talents and strengths to achieve a common objective.

As a camper, I was expected to do what I perceived to be very difficult, if not impossible, tasks. With the guidance and support of my counselors, I was routinely able to accomplish those tasks. That was the case whether the task before me was climbing a mountain or living without basic amenities. At the same time, through these challenges, I discovered and put into practice the qualities and values needed to succeed in school, work and other life endeavors such as responsibility, initiative, and critical thinking skills. From my humble beginnings at camp, the natural world continues to inspire innovative approaches to teaching and learning as an Environmental Learning Teacher for the Outdoor School program at Cheakamus Centre.”

Teresa “Granite” Rowley, Environmental Learning Teacher, Cheakamus Centre



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"I attended North Vancouver Outdoor School as a grade 6 student in 1978. I still remember the jingle that my cabin group made up about our Cabin 8. I have been back as a teacher countless times over the last 30 years with grade 3's, 4's and 6's, both for the Outdoor School program and the Longhouse program. Having the opportunity to see my students in a setting other than the classroom is invaluable. It is exciting to see students who struggle academically thrive in an outdoor environment. Students make new social connections, and for many, this is the first time they have been away from home.... It truly is a unique program that helps make North Vancouver an excellent school district. I am very thankful for the creativity and dedication of its staff and supporters that have been instrumental in, not only keeping it alive, but also for continually striving to improve and enhance the programs offered."

Maureen Schmid, Teacher, North Vancouver School District

"When people ask me what I teach, I love telling them that my goal as an educator is to inspire and connect students to nature. I try to create a positive experience for students in the outdoors, one that will encourage them to consider the environment in their future decisions. I hope to connect students to nature in a way that will help them feel that they are part of this community. I hope that they can learn that they are part of something bigger than themselves - and that nature is something that we can learn from and in."



Heidi "Glacier" Lessman Simm, Environmental Learning Teacher, Cheakamus Centre



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“To love a place is not enough. We must find ways to heal it.”
~ Robin Wall Kimmerer

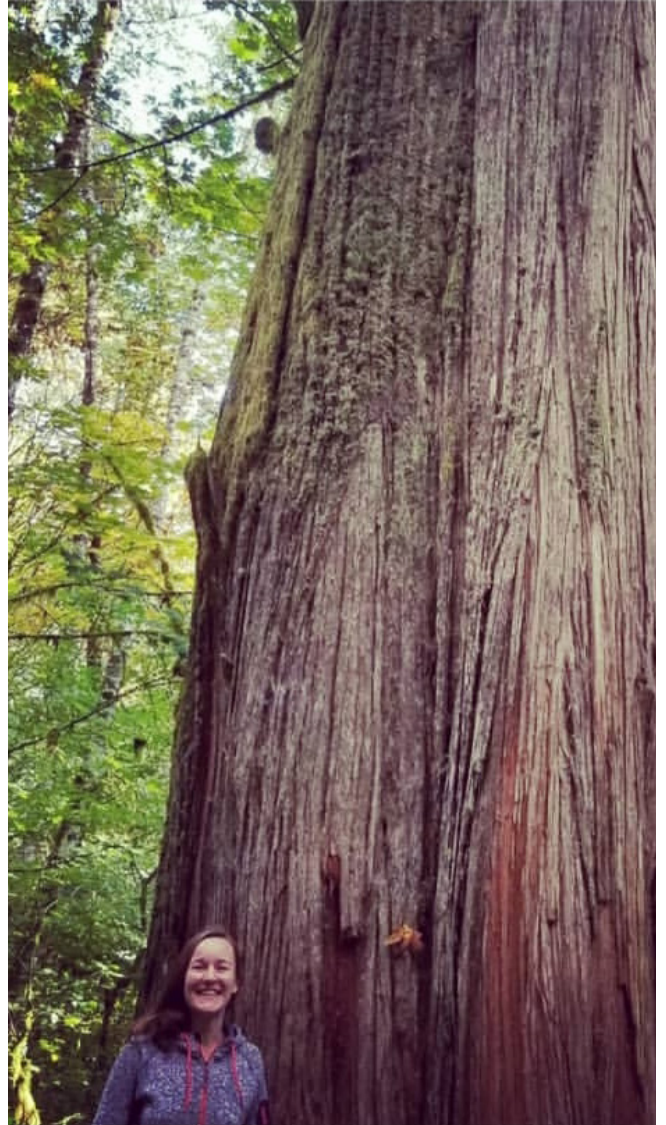
“As an environmental learning teacher working at Cheakamus, on the lands of the Squamish Nation, one of the most rewarding aspects of my job is the opportunity to spend time outside, and to foster connections of wonder, a sense of respect and responsibility within the students that come here.

It always amazes me how much I can learn from the land. In many ways, this Place has become a teacher to me by helping me to deepen my ecological understanding and foster relationships with the non-human life that exists here.

One of the most fantastic aspects of this job is witnessing the interconnectedness and rhythms of life here. Perhaps the most gripping narrative being played out across the reserve, is the story of the salmon, eagles and bears, for which Cheakamus is home. It is quite incredible to witness the return of the salmon, who have overcome many challenges to find their way back home to their natal streams. The salmon also bring a number of eagles and bears. There are not many jobs, in fact, where you can walk outside to find ten eagles perched in a tree, or a bear swatting salmon out of the streams! This is definitely a major perk of what I do!

All the life in this Place fills me with gratitude and a sense of reverence. This makes my work here extremely meaningful.

**Rosie “Alpine” Doucette, Environmental Learning Teacher
Cheakamus Centre**



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"My real connection with nature began at [Cheakamus Centre for] the Outdoor School [program] when I worked here as the Bighouse Teacher. It was early on one morning when I was walking over to the salmon hatchery with Otter, a seasoned NVOS teacher at the time, when he suddenly paused and shushed me. He listened for a moment and then said, "Merlin – and it sounds like she's not too happy!" I was blown away – to me it was as though he had suddenly revealed some magic power that allowed him to identify not only the bird, but also its sex and temperament just by hearing its cries! How could anyone possibly know this much about their natural surroundings? Needless to say, I was very intrigued..."

Inspired, I became determined to learn more and more about nature – not just the birds, but also the plants, fungi, insects, aquatic species and so on – and have really come to appreciate the expression, "We see what we know." I realize I now see, hear, and feel the natural world in a whole new way – the more I know and recognize, the more closely connected I feel to my natural surroundings. This is the gift that Cheakamus Centre offers to all who visit this amazing place."

Top ten Outdoor School / Cheakamus Centre Memories:

#10 - My one and only school experience when my class came in grade 7

I had a blast and still can picture so many of the activities we enjoyed. One funny thing that happened was when our teachers played a joke on one of the counselors, "Sponge", at skit night – needless to say, he left a little wetter than when he came – all in good fun!

#9 - The first time I saw the eagles in winter

I remember being in awe when I first saw one low in a tree along the river looking me eye-to-eye. I thought, "How can this amazing sight have been in my backyard my whole life, and yet I haven't seen eagles like this until now!"



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#8 - Pulling salmon out of the traps late in December with Jim Wisnia

This was when I was a TOC at the Outdoor School. It was just the two of us and it was my first time getting in the stream and hauling out the salmon. With big fluffy snow falling heavily around us, there was something magical about that afternoon has since stayed with me.

#7 - Making up a rumor about “a newly adopted llama named Sherbert”

Montroyal came up with Capilano a few years ago and I managed to convince the visiting teacher who was doing the farm field study (along with a little help from Steelhead) that the school had recently adopted a llama. He looked for it for a day (I told him it might have been in a back pasture...) and asked finally the maintenance staff about it who laughed and laughed! It ended up becoming a theme for the week with the counselor making up llama hand signs and “Have You Seen This Llama” signs appearing all over the grounds on the last day.

#6 - Planning “Survivor” parties every Thursday night for the counselors

This was so much fun – the first aid attendant, whose real name was Skye, and I would decorate the counselor’s lounge “Hawaiian” style – we even had leis for everyone – and prepare a nacho feast. Then we would watch Survivor and pause to play a games that we made up that were similar to those in the show for hilarious dollar store prizes – always a blast – we even got Principal Sky into the fun!



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#5 - Hosting the bird station at the Open House

If you ever get a chance to come to this fun-filled day, swing by the bird station to test your skill at “Bird Brain”! A fun game I put together for this event that gives you extra votes toward choosing the Cheakamus Centre Bird of the Year!

#4a - Long walks & talks with Victor and his giant Bernese mountain dogs

I learned a lot from Victor – virtually every time we went for a stroll around the property I came away with new ideas for my lessons (and my visiting Sea-to-Sky Tours walks which were also part of my job at the time). I could tell he really loved this place and we enjoyed each other’s sense of humor and fun. This summer I finally walked the whole Skywalk trail – longer than I thought! - it has the best view of Outdoor School, much like I often thought Sky truly had.

#4b - Borrowing” the NOVS van to take my punk band to Vernon

My band was scheduled to play a show on a Friday night and our regular van was out of commission. Victor I agreed to let me borrow the NVOS van – but I didn’t exactly say how far I was taking it! We left Friday afternoon, played a crazy / terrific show and I returned just in time the following morning for the Bighouse training session! I felt relieved when Sky said he was impressed with my dedication (rather than chastising me for being so brash with a school vehicle!)

#3 - Leading bird field studies as a visiting teacher

I’ve done almost all of the main field studies that teachers typically do when they bring up their grade 6 classes – but have never had so much fun as when I started organizing my own birding one. I feel it’s a great example of the kids getting a lot more out of their learning because the teacher has so much enthusiasm for the subject!

#2 - All of the fun and special times with my friends at the Bighouse

Little Richard, Anne, Diane and Bernie – we all spent a lot of time together and got to know each other really well. We had lots of great times and always knew how to make each other laugh. Special memories for me include a ceremony to protect the Bighouse when it was threatened by floodwaters, and the first pow-wow held at an Open House. I miss all of them so much and they all have a special place in my heart.

#1 - Experiencing the seasons change on my monthly bird counts

Four years ago I had the idea to come up once a month to do a fairly formal survey of the bird species at the Cheakamus Centre. The plan was that the first year I would come up on the first week of each month, the second year, the second week, and so on until we had collected data for every week of the year. As it turns out, October 2019 will be the last week needed to complete the survey! Over these last four years I have counted 96 different kinds of birds that visit the property from time to time. I’m convinced there are still a few to find –and am sure we’ll break 100 someday soon! But counting the birds has just been part of the fun. My partner in life (and in birding), Andrea, and I love experiencing the seasons change from month to month while exploring the seemingly endless trails. It’s never the same day twice up here and whether it’s sunny, rainy or full of snow and ice, it’s always an adventure!

There are so many more memories – too many to share – I love this place!

Mark Thomson aka Tofu aka Ch’ésken (Golden Eagle), Teacher, North Vancouver School District

CHEAKAMUS CENTRE

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50 Years - 50 Faces: September

"I had the privilege of going to outdoor school from k to grade 4 as I went to Monterey elementary and there were only 60 kids in our school, so we went every year. I vividly remember my kindergarten experience as I got to help the harvesting the roe and spawn for the hatchery. I also was lucky enough to be a counsellor and made lasting friendships and benefited greatly from the leadership opportunities. I now work in the field of environmental issues and am grateful for both the understanding and passion that outdoor school set as my baseline in life. My two daughters will be going to outdoor school in the coming years as they are in school district #44 and I can't wait to hear their stories and experiences. All the best!"

Analise Saely, former student, counsellor and parent to future students



"11 years later and this place still continues to inspire me! Not many can say their job environment relaxes them - I am lucky enough to say it does. I was working for Cheakamus Centre prior to the re-branding when it was still called North Vancouver Outdoor School. I am so happy that I have continued to be a part of its growth, as I have seen a great deal of advancements in the past six years, but most importantly, they've stayed true to their initial vision. As a member of the housekeeping team, I get a sense of pride and joy from making buildings and rooms 'sparkle' again. Seeing the smiles on children's faces who are fortunate enough to visit this paradise is the cherry on top! My family has a large farm in Paradise Valley with ducks, pigs, chickens, horses, rabbits, dogs, cat etc., so I feel right at home on the Cheakamus farm, and I appreciate interacting/ watching all the various wildlife who call Cheakamus Centre home. Most of all, it's the team at Cheakamus who make me want to continue to work here. I not only feel welcomed and respected, I always feel that they are open to hear my ideas, support me, and treat me with kindness."

Almuth Spitzer, Housekeeping Supervisor, Cheakamus Centre



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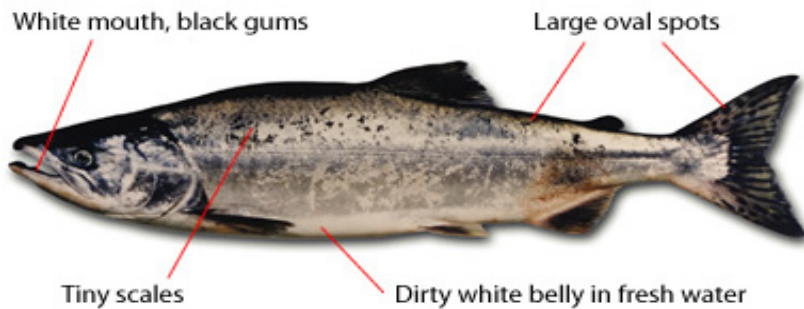
CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

50 Years - 50 Faces: September

Welcome back, pink salmon!

Since 1981, Cheakamus Centre has worked together with conservation partners and committed individuals to restore historic salmon habitat on the property and establish the ecologically focused salmon and eagle refuge it is today.

BC Pink Salmon [Learn more](#)



"I have been enjoying visits to the Cheakamus Centre since I first moved to the area in 1992. My favourite activity is to walk or tour people along the salmon channels. There is such a rich history on the site, and it is truly a gem within Brackendale. The integration of such a vast expanse of off-channel salmon habitat in combination with a school and a hatchery only adds to what makes this place so special. Whether it is a visit in the fall when the fish is migrating, or an opportunity to count the Bald Eagles that arrive in the winter to feed off of the dead salmon carcasses, there is always something new to discover. The opportunity these past few years to work directly with the Cheakamus Centre on expanding and maintaining the salmon habitat has been a rewarding experience as well. The complexity of nature can be observed every time you look around and the Cheakamus Centre is full of such wonders. The wildlife in the area is extraordinary as is the amazing vegetation that is as close to old growth as we get in the valley. Every visit is an exciting discovery."



Edith Tobe, Professional Biologist and Executive Director for the Squamish River Watershed Society

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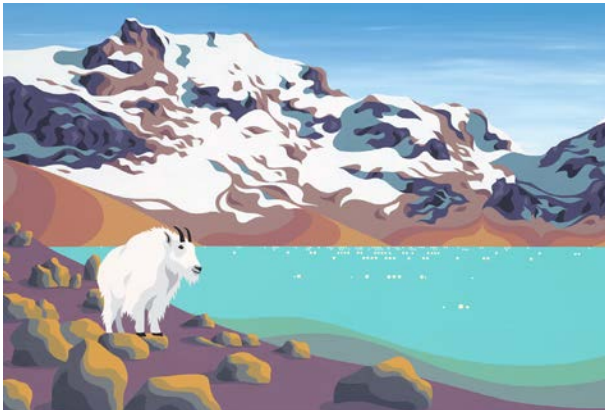
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“Di is a contemporary landscape and wildlife artist living on Bowen Island, BC. Growing up in Deep Cove she developed a love and appreciation for the natural world and brings that love to life through her colorful acrylic paintings. However, it was at Cheakamus Centre/North Vancouver Outdoor School in the Paradise Valley that her love for nature had a chance to deepen. A strong connection was formed over the 10+ years Di was involved with NVOS as a student, counsellor, trainer, alumni and recipient of the NVOSAS scholarship. During this time, she gathered countless fond memories such as hugging giant old growth trees draped in moss, owl calling lessons in the dark, finding bear scat in the woods and fertilizing salmon eggs in a bucket. Beyond being immersed in nature the Centre was an opportunity for a shy young girl to find comfort and companionship in like-minded individuals, those who shared a love for nature and commitment to environmental education. She continues to honor her days at Cheakamus by using her artwork to raise support and awareness for nature conservation in British Columbia.” www.artbydi.ca

Diana “Dinosaur” Izdebski, Artist, former ODS student & counsellor, past recipient of ODS Alumni Scholarship



CHEAKAMUS CENTRE

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50 Years - 50 Faces: August

"For 26 years, Cheakamus Centre has been my home away from home for two weeks every summer. Artist for Kids Paradise Valley Summer School of Visual Arts allows me to engage in both of my passions: visual arts and working with youth in an educational forum. There is a special familiarity and comfort working outdoors surrounded by nature and sounds of the river. Every year, I'm inspired by the relationship between visiting artists, teachers and children, and how the Cheakamus River Valley landscape is incorporated into the learning. Our artists walk away re-charged and re-invigorated, and eager to incorporate the dynamics of camp into their own practice."

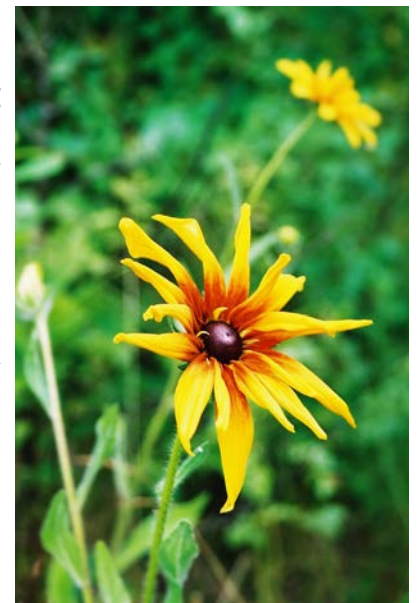
Yolande Martinello, District Principal and Director of Artists for Kids



The Sweet Scent of Summer

Black-eyed Susan is a familiar summer-blooming wildflower. Its hairy leaves are adapted to retain water, and its flowers can be used to make a yellow dye. This long-lasting bloomer is very attractive to the bees, flies, butterflies, and beetles that feed on its nectar and pollen. The fruiting heads also provide seed for birds over the winter. First Nations people used it for colds, flus, infections and swelling. A cheery, sun-loving flower, it is also known as Brown Daisy, Poor-land Daisy, Yellow Daisy, Yellow Ox-Eye Daisy, Brown Eyed Susan, Brown Betty, and Golden Jerusalem.

Black-eyed Susan (Rudbeckia hirta)



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“Put 75 burn survivors together for a week with 65 volunteer counsellors and support staff in the most amazing location on earth and you have the formula for success.

When the campers were asked what they love about the camp, the comments came fast and furious “there is tons to do, you can play basketball, pet the animals, go for a polar bear swim, do yoga, watch movies, eat awesome snacks and just hang out with friends and talk,” they said.

Thomas Zarelli has been attending camp for 14 years and is one of this year’s junior counsellors. He shares why he loves it here. “My favorite part of Burn Camp is just being here. It’s really about the kids. We are all here for the kids because of the support. Survivors often go through depression or have anxiety. It’s nice to have a week to be away from all that and be around people who are just like you.”

The BC Professional Fire Fighters’ Burn Fund Burn Camp is now in its 26th year, with many of those memorable years spent at the Cheakamus Centre. Burn Camp has hosted more than 1,000 young burn survivors aged six to 18 for a week of fun, connection, and support.”

Young Burn Survivors “Burn Camp”, British Columbia Professional Fire Fighters’ Burn Fund



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"Square dancing, feeding the farm animals and being cared for by counsellors (not adults!) were highlights of Outdoor School for me as an elementary school student. My nickname was "Rainbow" when I counselled in high school and I remember teaching eagle and salmon studies with "Skye". I enjoyed working with the kids and other counsellors and it helped me gain confidence in my leadership and teaching skills. Years later, my own kids were lucky to experience Outdoor School in grades 2 and 6. Attending the "Bighouse" with my eldest when she was in grade 4 was excellent learning of indigenous ways for me as a parent and of course the students. Cooking over a fire and with hot rocks as well as making rope out of cedar bark are great memories and my family continues to cook "bannock" when we go camping in the summers.

Protecting [Cheakamus Centre] from budget cuts was something I felt strongly about when I participated in Budget 2010 as PAC Chair of my kid's school. When elected as a school Trustee in 2011, it was important to me to communicate the value of the multiple programs offered at Cheakamus Centre. I appreciate the teachers and administrators who take our students on these overnight programs and I value the work that goes into making these experiences happen. Cheakamus Centre offers experiential education - learning about the environment while living in it; and Cheakamus staff work hard to create sustainable, inclusive programs that teach students about taking care of our earth, while learning about themselves and working with others. I hope that this hands-on learning will stay with them when they return to the city and help to influence their positive connections with the environment.

I have attended the "Outdoor School" as a student, a counsellor, a parent volunteer and now as a School Trustee. My children have attended as students and counsellors. The name has changed but the fact that it has been a valuable part of my life and my families has not. I am proud of the work that is being done and will continue to support it."

Christie Sacré, Chair, North Vancouver Board of Education

CHEAKAMUS CENTRE

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

50 Years - 50 Faces: July



Photo L to R: Charlene Jenkins, Friend of Cheakamus; Wendy Jenkins, ODS alumni & mom of 2 ODS alumni; Cathy Jenkins, ODS & counsellor alumni

Excerpt from: Maria Spitale-Leisk. "Cheakamus celebrates 48 years outside."
North Shore News 2 May 2017

"Cathy Jenkins' history in Paradise Valley starts in the early 1970s. "My mom actually still had the postcard my sister mailed home from outdoor School in 1971!" writes Jenkins in an email to the News. "I'm not sure for how many years the tradition of letter writing continued, but when we went in the 70s all kids wrote a card home and the red mailbox (a bit faded) is still on the side of the admin building at Cheakamus Centre.

In her senior year at Handsworth Secondary, Jenkins volunteered as a counsellor at Outdoor School – in an Internet-free era when reading paperbacks by flashlight under the covers and catching fish were fulfilling forms of amusement. Jenkins went on to become the first operations manager for North Vancouver Outdoor School and was most recently named project manager for the Cheakamus Centre campus revitalization.

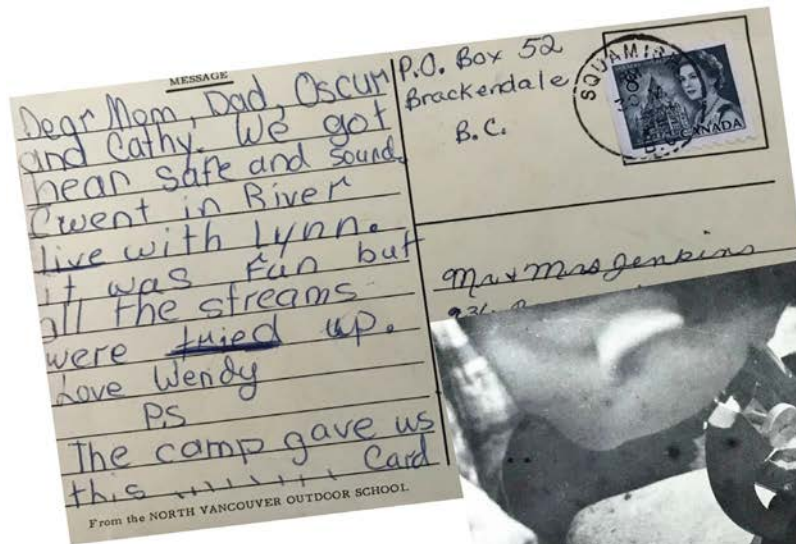
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CHEAKAMUS CENTRE

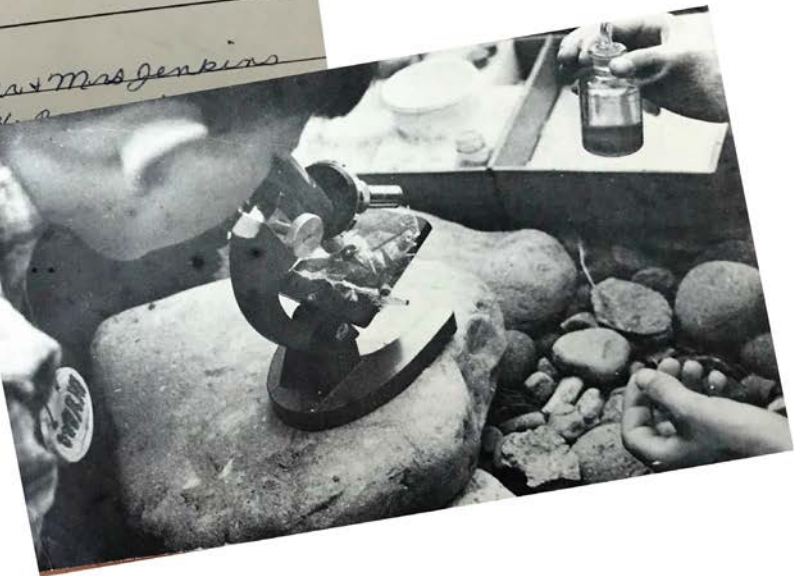
CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

50 Years - 50 Faces: July

It was those initial magical and adventure-filled days at Outdoor School, which inspired Jenkins to champion this unbridled educational experience for youth. "Mom always said 'you girls were never the same after Outdoor School,' says Jenkins. "She meant that in a good way, as my sister and I both returned home after a week away brimming with new-found confidence and independence."



Wendy Jenkins, Cathy's sister, sent this postcard home during her life-changing Outdoor School experience.



Cathy Jenkins, former student & ODS alumni counsellor; Project Manager, Campus Renewal, Cheakamus Centre

Chick-amus Chuckle...

What do chickens call school tests?
Eggs-aminations.



CHEAKAMUS CENTRE

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

50 Years - 50 Faces: July

At the farm at Cheakamus Centre,

- we collect over 100 eggs every month, and close to 100 chicks hatch each year!
- we have various breeds of chickens, including: Leghorn, Rhode Island red, Silkie, Barred rock and Bantam.

We recently adopted a healthy white rooster, named “Peeps”. Peeps is a lover, not a fighter; he enjoys walks around the yard with humans, getting cuddles and stroked behind the comb on top of his head. Peeps grew up in Squamish Valley and is adjusting well to life on the farm in Paradise. As a good-looking ‘fella”, Peeps has drawn the envy of some of the more established roosters on the farm but takes his place in the pecking order with minimal complaint.

Peeps, Cheakamus farm resident



CHEAKAMUS CENTRE

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

50 Years - 50 Faces: July



"I experienced Cheakamus Centre (formerly North Vancouver Outdoor School) as a student on several occasions. In grade 3 and 6 for the Outdoor School (ODS) program, and in grade 4 for the Skw'une-was indigenous cultural immersion program. My identical twin sister also joined me every time I visited, including when we both participated in the counsellor program. I left a piece of my heart behind every time I frequented Cheakamus Centre, and I thank my lucky stars that I was (and still am) given the opportunity to witness all its wonder.

When I first attended "Outdoor School" as a student, my family and I had only lived in British Columbia for two years. I spoke very little English and was unfamiliar with Canadian culture. We immigrated to Canada from Iran, leaving as refugees in 1986 during a very volatile time in Iranian history. We resided in Turkey for one year awaiting our paper work, then finally made the journey to Canada. We lived in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island for just over a year before driving across Canada to Vancouver, British Columbia. We chose to make North Vancouver our home (still do), and to this day, I am so incredibly fortunate that our parents decided to raise us in North Van.

One of the biggest reasons for this is because of how much Cheakamus Centre changed my (and my sister's) life. I don't remember much about my first experience at "Outdoor School", but what I do remember is that everything was new to me – this place was something right out of a fairy tale! Yes, I was young, and many things are new when you're young, but this was not any type of place I had experienced. It felt surreal, almost magical.

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CHEAKAMUS CENTRE

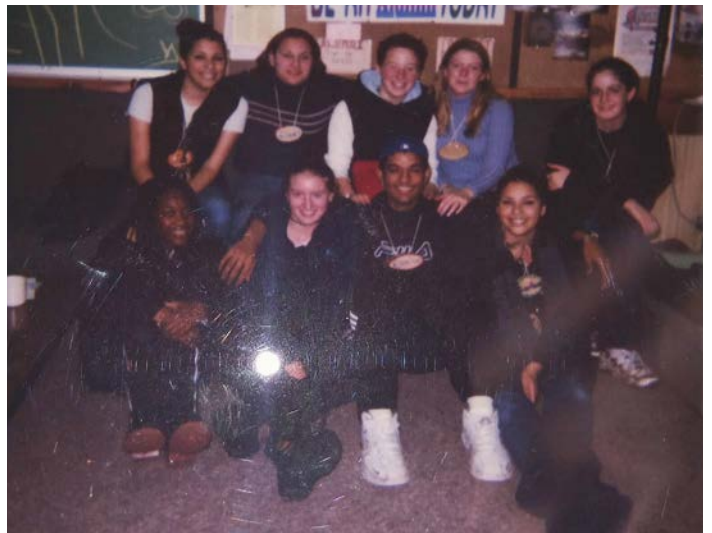
CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

50 Years - 50 Faces: July

I still vividly remember LOVING bannock COVERED in honey, cooking food with hot rocks, and weaving with cedar at the longhouse. Looking back at that experience now, I realize it was probably the moment that I first understood the immensity of this world. As an immigrant, it was challenging to adjust to Canadian culture. We often had to adapt quickly, and sometimes concealed our own culture in an attempt to “fit in”. What the longhouse experience did for me was show me that there are different cultures in this world, and it is important to embrace the uniqueness of them all. Learning about the traditional daily life of the Coast Salish people in such an experiential way is something that I will never forget. Back when I attended the Skw’une-was program in grade 4, it was a time well before smartphones and social media (and really the internet), but life was still moving fast, and overstimulation was very prevalent. In that simple experience, I realized that I wasn’t the only one with different traditions, food, and behaviour; there were so many others that were different as well! Immersing in Skwxwú7mesh First Nation cultural practices made me understand the dichotomy between a very simple way of life versus the complexity (and importance) of deep traditions. Interestingly enough, I felt closer to my own culture, which is also filled with profound customs. Of course, I know I didn’t fully grasp all of these “a-ha” moments back then but reflecting on some of the specific memories of that experience, I know that it had a lasting impact on me.

When I returned to “Outdoor School” as a student in grade 6, I had an entirely different experience than when I attended 3 years prior - I was a pro at this point! Plus, we were participating in some new activities – canoeing, archery, and the caves to name a few! I was older and more comfortable, so I embraced staying overnight with my friends and enjoying my time in nature. I remember loving the salmon hatchery field study; in fact, I requested it every single time that I attended as a high school and alumni counsellor. I still get flashbacks of playing “Predator and Prey” and square dancing in Melody Hall. I think those memories will always stay with me, and that makes me very happy.

Continued...



CHEAKAMUS CENTRE

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

50 Years - 50 Faces: July

In grade 10, I participated in the high school counsellor program. Now when I say that Cheakamus Centre had a lasting impact on my life, this program was really the clincher. I gained so much confidence during my time as a counsellor. The person that I am today is deeply-rooted to my time as an ODS counsellor. During elementary school and the first half of high school, I was reserved, and I wouldn't have characterized myself as a very confident individual. Though I was social and enjoyed the company of people, I didn't see myself as a natural leader. This all changed for me during the counsellor training weekend. I couldn't believe that we were being trained to become counsellors, who would be responsible in guiding and leading primary and intermediate students. When you are 15 or 16 years old, you honestly cannot believe that you are being trusted with such a big task because most of the time you are being told what you should (or shouldn't) be doing. When I attended ODS as a grade 3 and 6 student the counsellors were so remarkable, I really looked up to them, and here I was being trained to be one – amazing! I loved every second of my counsellor weeks and often would get sad when it was over, which was why I returned so often in high school and later when I was attending post-secondary school. I learned patience and independence, gained confidence, and built my leadership and team-building skills. I attained a deep connection to the natural world, and those experiences helped me understand, early on, the importance of environmental stewardship. All characteristics that I am proud to hold today, and I truly believe I wouldn't have acquired them if it weren't for all the various experiences I had at Cheakamus Centre.

The opportunity came to join the team at Cheakamus Centre again and I couldn't have been more excited. When I first came across the posting, the re-branding to "Cheakamus Centre" was already in place. When I read the post further, I couldn't believe it - it was MY "Outdoor School"! I recall the first time I walked into a cabin during my orientation, I inhaled and took a deep long breath, and all the memories as a child and counsellor came flooding back. I am not exaggerating when I say, this place sticks with you. Cheakamus Centre took a piece of my heart back in 1992 and the year's following. To me, this 'piece' is in a leaf dancing through Fuzzy's Footpath, in a pebble at the bottom of the Ch'iyákmesh River, in a piece of hay at the farm, in a cedar bough at the longhouse- it is all over this beautiful place. Like many who have a similar story, Cheakamus Centre is ours and we are Cheakamus Centre's. Once you let it in, it becomes a part of you and that part will always be there, in nature. I am fortunate to have been a part of Cheakamus Centre's growth over the last five years and I look forward to the many years ahead. This place is a huge part of who I am, and I'm honoured to give back to it, what it gave to me."

Sepideh Tazzman, former student & ODS alumni counsellor; Communications and Marketing Manager, Cheakamus Centre



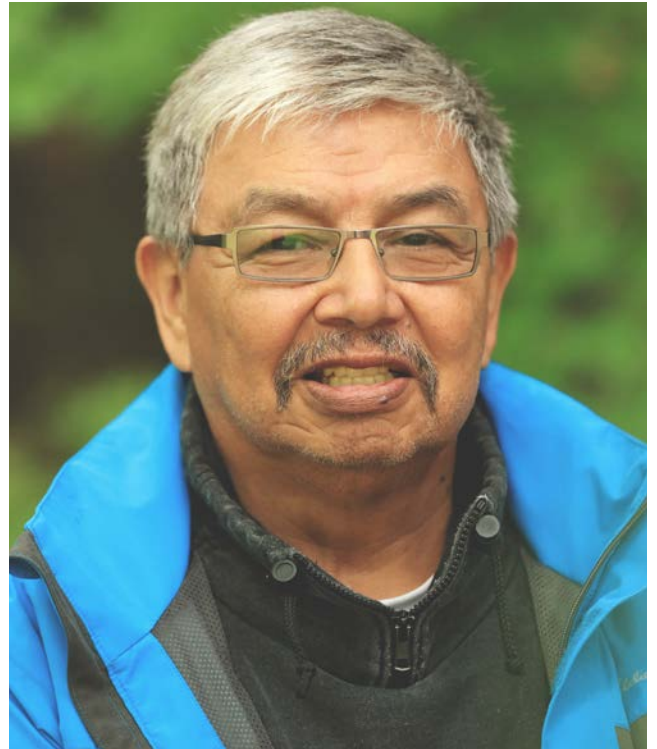
CHEAKAMUS CENTRE

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

50 Years - 50 Faces: June

“As a key member of the Skw’une-was instructional team at Cheakamus Centre, I have brought with me a wealth of knowledge related to the history and practices of Skwxwú7mesh people; including a deep understanding of the geography of the region. In addition to teaching activities here at the Cheakamus Centre, I contribute to archeological, mapping, and historical projects for Skwxwú7mesh Nation in collaboration with a range of post-secondary institutions. My family has lived in this area for centuries and I frequently share information about points of significance and family markers. It is important that the children know and understand that people lived here and thrived before we met Europeans and our lands were occupied. I am a proud father and grandfather who demonstrates through my actions that a life-long commitment to learning, leadership, and community-building has the power to transform and shape a better understanding of the importance of Skwxwú7mesh culture.”

Khapquolanogh (Henry) Williams, Cultural Education Facilitator, Cheakamus Centre



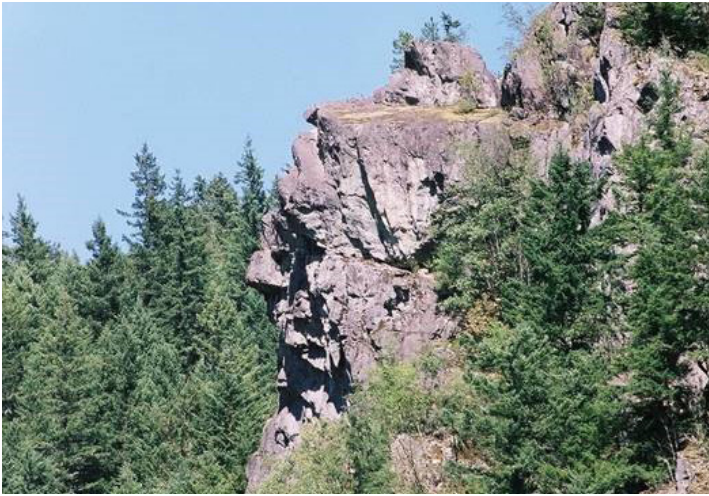
“I have spent much of my childhood at the longhouse at Cheakamus Centre, supporting and teaching the Skw’une-was program since the age of 13. My grandmother, Keek-yik (Ann Billy) first introduced me to Skwxwú7mesh teaching methods and guided me in the development of my practice by learning directly from family members. In addition to my on-going contributions to provide outstanding indigenous cultural education at Cheakamus Centre, I was also a key member of the Squamish Lil’wat Cultural Centre project and provided cultural interpretation mentoring to Aboriginal Youth Ambassadors in preparation for the 2010 Olympics. Leading by example, I share, singing, drumming, fishing, woodworking, cedar weaving and ancestral language skills with thousands of students ensuring the continuity of these practices and inspiring others to learn more. I am also on the path to becoming a fluent Skwxwú7mesh language speaker. My favourite part about working at Cheakamus Centre is being able to pass down the knowledge given to me from my ancestors. I also enjoy being outside and close to the river.”

Siyámken (Matthew) Williams, Cultural Education Facilitator, Cheakamus Centre

CHEAKAMUS CENTRE

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

50 Years - 50 Faces: June



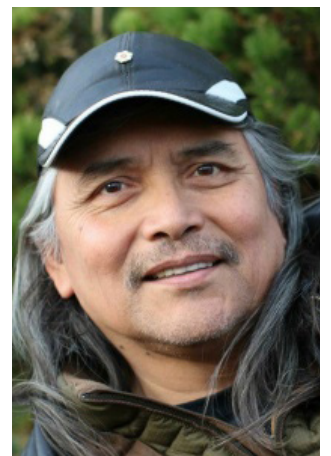
“High on the mountain overlooking the Ch’iyákmesh and Paradise Valley, is the image of Wountie, protecting the river.”

Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) Legend

“Excerpts adapted from: McKave, Marianne. “Dream of walk through longhouse one step closer” North Shore News, 12 October 1983.

“Thursday, under sunny skies, the dream was pushed closer to reality with one great heave from friends, who helped erect a 25-foot high pole, kicking off construction of a longhouse based on [Xwalacktun’s (Rick Harry)] model on the grounds of the North Vancouver Outdoor School. It was time for celebration. Squamish Nation members, friends, and School District 44 representatives gathered in the clearing at the school’s south end to be part of the ceremony. Twenty-five-year-old Harry, a graduate of the Emily Carr College of Arts, says he wanted to re-create the longhouse in the traditional style. He read books and did his own research to produce a structure similar to those, which were once found in his own village. “I used to sit on a stool while making it, look inside and try to make myself feel like I was walking in there,” he recalls.

Xwalacktun (Rick Harry), Artist



CHEAKAMUS CENTRE

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

50 Years - 50 Faces: May



“Ah...Outdoor School – a treasure of a program that has been offered in the North Vancouver School District since 1969.

As I toured the 420 acres of pristine wilderness, memories of the time I spent here as a child came flooding back. I remember bits and pieces of my first visit to Outdoor School with my grade three French Immersion class from Sherwood Park Elementary. In particular, I remember playing a giant game of tag outside, eating as a class in the former cafeteria, and staying in the cabins (and getting quite homesick).

I remember much more from my second visit – to Bighouse in grade four. I loved it! The class was divided into groups to learn various aspects of local First Nations culture. I remember learning about local foods like blackberries, about cedar weaving and about the importance of salmon. I also really enjoyed sleeping as a class in the Bighouse (maybe because I didn't get homesick). My absolute favourite part though, something I will never forget, was cooking bannock over open fire. To this day I love, love, love baked bannock. Lucky for me my grandmother-in-law makes killer bannock!

For two summers in elementary school I also went to French summer camp at the Cheakamus Centre grounds. While I remember getting homesick each time, I also recall having a wonderful time. Campfires, outdoor adventures, great friends – it was a lovely way to spend some of my summer breaks.

Continued...

CHEAKAMUS CENTRE

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

50 Years - 50 Faces: May

But my most memorable time at the Cheakamus Centre was Outdoor School in grade six – and the visit was at this exact time of year. It was the end of September, leaves were starting to turn, and the air was beginning to chill. It was an experience that has profoundly impacted my life. For this trip, the French Immersion students and English students were combined into one program. I didn't really know any of the English students before this trip. I remember being incredibly nervous at first to be meeting all of these new people. Soon enough, however, I had met an entire group of new friends – most of which remain my friends to this day. There is one person in particular that I vividly remember meeting. He had a classic army haircut (buzzed sides with a bit of a flattop), was loud and a class clown, but also incredibly nice and welcoming. I remember seeing him for the first time, standing outside of the old cafeteria as all of the students were being divided into groups at the start of our five-day visit.

I don't know why I remember this so well, but I am glad that I do. Him and I were great friends from that point onward and, eventually, I married him. I have to admit...he doesn't remember meeting me at Outdoor School (and he continues to bug me that my memory is too good).

Cheakamus Centre truly is a special place that we are incredibly lucky to have as part of the North Vancouver School District. I'm certain that it has impacted others as profoundly as it has me, and that it will continue to do so for generations to come. I wish all of the students who will visit Cheakamus Centre this school year, a wonderful and meaningful time!"

Deneka Michaud, Communications Manager, North Vancouver School District



"I started my Outdoor School journey the way a lot of North Vancouver youth do, as an excited primary student. I knew even back then that it was a place I would keep coming back to. As soon as I could become a counsellor I signed up, and the rest was history. Cheakamus Centre has been such a big part of my life for the last decade or more. It was where I found a lot of my friends in the earlier years, but ultimately where I found out who I was in the end.

If it weren't for Outdoor School and the great mentors I found there, I might not have known how much I loved teaching. It was my year there as the Senior Counsellor where I decided that I needed to become a teacher. Now I have been back not only with my practicum class this past fall, but I am regularly back teaching up there as a TTOC. It is a special place that has forever influenced me on a personal and professional level."

Genevieve Bailey, North Vancouver School District TTOC; former Outdoor School student/Senior Counsellor

CHEAKAMUS CENTRE

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

50 Years - 50 Faces: May

"I have the Outdoor School sewn into the fabric of my being. I grew up in North van and went to Outdoor School in grade three in 1983 and grade six in 1986. In grade six I remember it snowed and we built igloos and snow castles and watched eagles drop salmon on the snow forts. It left an impression on me, so much that I returned as a high school counsellor 10 different times. As an Alumni, I had such fun with the many friends made during training weekends. When the Senior counsellor position came into being, I was so thrilled, and in 1997 I became the second senior counsellor for a six-month stint. I returned again as an intern doing environmental programs. Outdoor school was in my blood. I became the night time Student Support Assistant and worked at the school for ten years. My nickname became Rainbow, because The Principal was named Sky, my real name!

My most significant moment at the School was the great flood on October 27, 2003. I was responsible for a weekend group and the rains poured, the river rose and we had to evacuate. Rolling away that night escorted by fire trucks and leaving behind the school and the animals, my car and my home, was a pivotal moment in my life. What it taught me was that nature is a force to be reckoned with, and that it can also be forgiving, nurturing, and restorative. My car survived the flood but not without a little drama. When we were finally let back onto the property, I found the car soaked by river water with a salmon on the hood. Miraculously the car started after several attempts, and on the radio, came CCR's "Rollin on a River". In the days following the flood we weren't sure if we would have a job or a school to continue teaching kids at. But after several months of work to reopen the roads, rebuild the dyke, and pick up millions of rocks, we were able to open the doors.

The outdoor school's legacy to me and the many who stayed there is incredible. It taught me to be a friend of the environment, to lead, and the importance of indigenous traditions, culture and medicine. I am grateful for this sacred space that allowed me to grow as a person, develop friendships that will last a lifetime and learn to respect nature."

**Skye "Rainbow" Walks, Outdoor School alumni;
former Program Support Specialist (1997-2007)**



50 Years - 50 Faces: May

"The fact is, I got lucky.

Growing up on Vancouver Island meant I never went to the Outdoor School (and yes it will forever be the Outdoor School to some of us) in elementary, nor would I have been aware of its volunteer counselling program had I not an "in", specifically in the shape of an uncle, known as Otter, who ran the hatchery. He convinced me as a gawky and awkward teenager, uncomfortable in my own skin, to come to training and try it out.

I got sick as a dog with the flu on the Friday of training. It was February, with packed snow on the ground and a particularly unpleasant, penetrating sleet falling from a dismal grey sky and I had never laughed so hard or so constantly in my life. By Sunday I knew I would be returning as soon as possible. For the rest of high-school I managed to make the trek from the island once a year and enjoyed every minute of my time. It turned out I was good with younger kids and they seemed to enjoy being with me, so naturally, when high school finished, I went off to study robotics.

It didn't go well.

I dropped the program at the end of first term having by this point started training counsellors as well. It also turned out I got along particularly well with the head counsellor at the time and let it be known I was at something of loose ends and that if counsellors were needed to give me a call and I would come help out.

It became a regular thing for me to get a call on Saturday evening that ODS needed counsellors for Monday. On Sunday, I would hop a Greyhound bus up to Nanaimo, catch the ferry, hike up to the highway then take on the Russian Roulette of trying to flag down the Greyhound heading for Squamish and points beyond. It says something about the place that it held that kind of a draw on an otherwise aimless teen. I think I probably spent a year's tuition on ferry rides and bus tickets during those next months. Finally, I guess they got fed up with coming to pick me up at the bus station and found funding for me to live and work on site as an intern making lessons and counselling and developing teaching materials and counselling and living in the old butterfly dorm and counselling.

I was fortunate enough to work with groups from Japan and the Philippines and somewhere along the way realized that what I really enjoyed doing was working with kids and so finally set off on the road to become a teacher. During the year I did my courses and for five glorious summers lived and worked at the Outdoor School, developing lesson plans, clearing paths, by turns boring or captivating the Landsea tour groups, painting the colour squares outside the old dining hall and joining in with whatever programs or mischief were happening at the time. You haven't lived until irate firefighters have kicked in your door at I am, taped you up, loaded you on a furniture dolly, doused you in flour and thrown you in the pool. As summer intern, it means you're doing something right!



CHEAKAMUS CENTRE

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

50 Years - 50 Faces: May

Eventually though I had to grow up and teaching grade three French immersion in Richmond has distanced me somewhat from this place I love and that made such an impression on me. I'll forever be grateful to Victor for providing me the opportunities he did and to Carl, for all his gloriously idiosyncratic contradictions and unexpected kindnesses. If we ever have a boy, both those names are near the top of my list.

I met my wife via the Outdoor School and firmly believe the bridal boutiques in North Van should be sending the ODS some kickbacks given the number of weddings it has spawned through the years. I still have a large jar full of many of my old name tags, each a memory of a happy time. I look at the jar frequently and remember friends both fleeting as well as those constant to this day and inevitably end up smiling.

Yes, I got lucky."

Sean "Newt" Aldcroft, Outdoor School alumni; former summer intern



"The North Vancouver Outdoor School has been in my heart for over 28 years. Growing up in North Vancouver meant that I got to be a part of the program in both elementary and high school. That first trip in grade 3 had me hooked and I couldn't wait to go back and experience the Big House program in grade 4 and then back to the NVOS program in grade 6 for a week! I fell in love with the sweet goats and stinky pigs at the farm, the green moss-covered trees, the slippery and intimidating burma bridge at the challenge games, the spawning salmon in the river and their babies in the fish hatchery. Singing Johnny Appleseed before meals and being the lucky cabin that got to go inside the kitchen to get the food for your table. As a child, the school taught me about nature and my role in it. How I could make a difference in the world I lived in. It gave me confidence in my learning. Taught me new ways to explore and learn about my environment. How to work together as a team with my fellow schoolmates. How to problem solve. It sparked my love for the outdoors.

Continued....

CHEAKAMUS CENTRE

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

50 Years - 50 Faces: May



Grade 10 was my happiest year in high school because it meant I could begin my journey as a counsellor. The training weekend was daunting, but once I was there, the Alumni trainers eased my fears and the weekend was a blast. That kicked off my counseling career and I went up as many times as my teachers would allow me to. Being able to pass my love of the school and the outdoors to elementary aged children was priceless. My confidence grew in huge strides and once graduating high school, there was no doubt in my mind that I wanted to become an Alumni and pass my skills onto the next generation of counselors.

In January of 2003, a few years into my Alumni career, I was fortunate enough to get hired as the Senior Counsellor, which meant living at the school for 6 months and I loved every minute of it. From mentoring and supervising the high school counselors, working with the groups of visiting elementary aged students, conducting tourism forestry tours to out of town guests to living in paradise, it truly was a dream job.

For over 6 years I was an active Alumni member, training high school students to become counselors, work party weekends doing maintenance around the school and sitting on the board of directors. As a board member I held the positions of secretary and vice-president over the years and was so proud of the money we were able to raise so that we could provide bursaries to ensure all kids had the chance to attend NVOS in their elementary school years. I knew the value the program provided to young minds and it was my passion to ensure all kids had the same chance I did.

Over the years as an Alumni member, I was fortunate to make some incredible friends, many of which I am still close with today. One in particular is now my husband! And even though we have moved on in life, we visit the Open House every year, so that we can pass along our love for the environment and all the amazing things the school offers with our child."

Erin "Ferne" Lenko, Outdoor School alumni; NVOSAS board member (1991-2009)

CHEAKAMUS CENTRE

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

50 Years - 50 Faces: April

“After working in the San Francisco Bay area for 20 years, my husband and I finally made the decision to come back to Vancouver in 2004. I was not ready for retirement and missed the adrenaline of working with others on challenging projects. As a librarian my expertise was in public health, environmental, and engineering libraries in a variety of corporate and academic settings. My last position before we moved back was as the Computer History Museum’s first archivist. My strengths lie in the organizing, digitizing and classification of disorganized collections of things, including books, documents, and old photos. Finding the right volunteer opportunity was a challenge until I met Sarah Bainbridge and started helping out with designing access to both old photos and more recent digital images taken at Cheakamus events.

Working with others committed to a sustainable, healthy, and joyous relationship with our environment means a lot to me. At Cheakamus Centre I apply lessons learned over years of organizing, digitizing, and cataloguing information in ways that make a real difference. The support, energy, and enthusiasm that everyone brings to educating both young and old about our natural and cultural environment is amazing. As a volunteer, I continue to learn more about my community, and to pursue my interest in photography, in a truly beautiful setting. And I’ve made many friends along the way!”

Sharon Brunzel, Cheakamus Foundation Volunteer



CHEAKAMUS CENTRE

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

50 Years - 50 Faces: April



“My name is Romain, I am from France. I arrived in Canada a few months ago and I started travelling around and spent some time discovering the country. It was my first time travelling to Canada and I went to Montreal first, and then Vancouver. I also spent a bit of time in the USA, mainly in Portland, Oregon.

I first heard of Cheakamus Centre while in Vancouver. I was looking to work in a place surrounded by nature and so I began volunteering with the [WorldWide Opportunities on Organic Farms, Canada \(WWOOF™ Canada\)](#) program and as a host site, Cheakamus really caught my attention.

I really enjoyed volunteering at Cheakamus Centre, it really is a great place with great people! I enjoyed discovering many of the trails onsite, and because Cheakamus Centre is really close to Squamish, I rode my mountain bike on many of the amazing trails available in Squamish. The location is also so close to the river and just an all-around beautiful place!

The WWOOF'ing program was a perfect way to discover an area, spend time with people, and enjoy some local delicious food all while learning. At Cheakamus Centre, it never really felt like a job. It is a relaxing environment and the people, and the culture were very laid back. I learned about farm animals and how to care for them, which was all new to me.

There are various species of farm animals at Cheakamus Centre, like goats, geese, pigs, chickens, and ducks. Looking after animals included, feeding them, cleaning around their habit and I gained multiple other skills on farm maintenance. I was always surrounded by nature, animals, and people, mainly students, and teachers participating in outdoor education programs.

Through communication with onsite staff, I advanced my English skills, which was a goal of mine when I first took on this program. I also met many other staff and fellow volunteers that were from all over the world, like Japan and Germany.

Cheakamus Centre is really a perfect place to volunteer and I would highly recommend it!”

Romain Merguez, Cheakamus Centre WWOOFer Volunteer from France (2018)



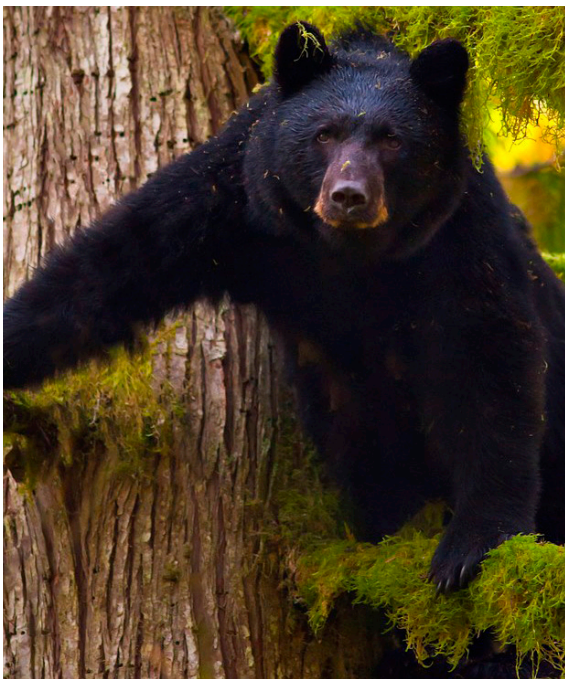
CHEAKAMUS CENTRE

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

50 Years - 50 Faces: April

"I attended Outdoor School [Cheakamus Centre] as a student in the 1980s. I was a counsellor in the late '80s, early '90s (camp name "Tia"). And this past decade I've sent each of my three children off for their week to Cheakamus Centre for the Outdoor School program. Fond, lasting memories of fish, chicks, baby pigs, and even releasing a rehabilitated golden eagle. I know my children will carry similar memories through to their adulthood too."

April (Tia) Durnan, Outdoor School student/counsellor alumni; parent of 3 children who have attended the Outdoor School program (1980-present)



"BC boasts one of the highest populations of my species (black bears) in the world with numbers being somewhere between 120 and 150 thousand! Pretty much all of BC is considered "bear country" aka "my country", with us inhabiting everything from the coastal forests, through to the interior grasslands. From north to south and east to west in this province you'll have a chance to see us. Since humans typically locate their homes, city, ranches and farms in our prime habitat, it stands to reason that there will be an opportunity for conflict with us. Calls to the Conservation Officer Reporting Line regarding conflicts with us and sightings of us are anywhere from 14,000 to 25,000 calls a year. To reduce the potential for conflicts with us, it is important that you learn as much as you can about me."

"Also, I just woke up. Help keep me wild by learning how to be extra bear-aware this time of year at www.WildSafeBC.com"

Neigh-BEAR-hood Face

CHEAKAMUS CENTRE

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

50 Years - 50 Faces: March



I first encountered the Outdoor School when I was preparing to be interviewed for the position of Secretary Treasurer of the North Vancouver School District. I was very impressed with this amazing property and how the school district used it to introduce children to sustainability issues. My commitment to the Outdoor School was immediate and my passion for its potential shone through during my interview. I believe it was a factor in why I was hired.

Over the next several years we tried many avenues to find money to enhance the property but the school district had limited funds for a major facilities upgrade and much higher priorities. When we won the \$1 million from the North Shore Credit Union [Blueshore Financial], I knew the time was right to do something big for the Outdoor School. After an extensive consultative process, the Board of Trustees agreed on a new strategic vision and rebranding of the Outdoor School. Our first priority was to build a welcoming center with a kitchen, dining area and classrooms. We wanted that first new building to be a shining example of sustainability that could be independently verified. After initially considering the living building standard we ultimately chose Leeds platinum as our building standard. That was a loftier goal than we ever imagined but we all believed it was critical to show leadership by walking the talk. I was very proud when the welcoming center was certified at the platinum level.

Irene Young, campus dean and executive director at the New York Institute of Technology; former secretary-treasurer of the North Vancouver School District

Click [here](#) for the North Shore News Article, April 2017



www.cheakamuscentre.ca

CHEAKAMUS CENTRE

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

50 Years - 50 Faces: March

"The celebration of fifty years of continuous environmental learning experiences is a testament to the vision and leadership provided in the establishment and early years of the Outdoor School. Through the outstanding dedication and commitment of staff throughout the years, often including personal sacrifice, this exceptional program has enriched the lives of so many and will be sustained for the benefit of generations to come.

My first trip to the Outdoor School was in 1979 as a student teacher. I think I followed that up with at least a dozen visits as a teacher, Vice Principal and Principal. Of course, I had a fair bit more to do with the Outdoor School as Assistant Superintendent and Superintendent! My thoughts kept returning to the dedication and sacrifice of staff. It wouldn't have been possible to continue the operations without these personal contributions. Keep up the good work!"

John Lewis, retired chief executive officer and superintendent of North Vancouver School District



A man of many talents! It is difficult to put into words the impact Carl had over three decades as the property manager. Whether building a hatchery aeration tower off a napkin sketch, designing an artistic bridge from recycled materials, or renovating after the "flood of the century", Carl's priority was always ensuring a safe and fun environment for children. His work has touched just about everyone and everywhere at Cheakamus Centre, and his knowledge of "everything Cheakamus" is second to none. Carl's countless contributions and innovations greatly contributed to Cheakamus Centre's growth and success over the years and leave a lasting legacy for the future. Thanks, Carl!

Carl Halvorson, Cheakamus Centre Property Manager (1982-2016)



CHEAKAMUS CENTRE

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

50 Years - 50 Faces: March



“Having grown up in North Vancouver, I attended “Outdoor School” (ie. field school) in 1999 with my Grade 6 class. I have fond and distinct memories of my time there - singing Johnny Appleseed before meals, the strong odour of the salmon run, running through the forest for a game of predator-prey, lessons about owls and eagles, and of course, visits to Capital the pig. I was also fortunate to participate in the Indigenous cultural immersion program in Grade 4, spending a night at the longhouse, frying bannock and connecting with Coast Salish cultures. These immersive, hands-on experiences were unique in my otherwise mostly-urban upbringing; As a child, I remember having a desire to sow seeds, observe animals in their natural setting, and connect with the magic of this coastal ecosystem, but - unlike today - school gardens and outdoor classrooms were not commonplace. I am so grateful for the moments at Outdoor School to have fed this curiosity about nature.

These experiences also likely played a formative role in my educational and vocational careers. A growing passion for ecology, animal behaviour and the human-nature interaction inspired me to pursue degrees in biopsychology and food systems sustainability. I currently work as a “Community Animator” for Farm to School’s Vancouver Area hub, supporting the transformation to sustainable, just, and culturally appropriate school food systems that foster food literacy, health and community engagement. I have become a strong advocate for environmental and Indigenous rights, animal welfare, and sustainable communities. And, I recently moved into the Squamish Valley so that I could spend more time surrounded by the forests that feel like home.

I think programs like those provided at Cheakamus Centre provide the unique setting and guidance that inspire many children and youth to think critically about our society, our relationship with nature and Indigenous peoples. In a world burdened by growing pressures on our social, environmental and economic systems, Cheakamus Centre plays a meaningful role in the development of more just, sustainable and viable communities by training the future stewards of this land. I am grateful to have been both a participant/benefactor and now colleague/supporter of this valuable facility!”

Samantha Gambling, Community Animator, Farm to School Vancouver Area Regional Hub Public Health Association of BC; Outdoor School Alumni (1999)

CHEAKAMUS CENTRE

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

50 Years - 50 Faces: February



"I counselled three times with ODS, and during my time counselling I learned how to put myself second after all the students I was leading. Before ODS, I was hyper-focused on myself and my needs. In this way, counselling was a great segue to nursing - putting others before myself, as cheesy as it may sound. Not only did I include my ODS experience on my application to UBC Okanagan, but I used the skills I learned when I was accepted and started to work in the hospital. Also, the food is BOMB - appreciated the vegan options!"

Claire Merriman Campbell, former three-time Outdoor School program counsellor



"Cheakamus Centre means a lot to me because it is a place where I've been coming to for years. When I came here for the first time, I was in Grade 3 and nine years old. I stayed in Cabin 5 and had a great time running around with my friends. I returned in Grades 4 and 6, and then thirteen or fourteen times as a counsellor before starting work here as a Counsellor Supervisor. Cheakamus Centre is a special place for me because I've seen it in a bunch of different contexts, since I was a little kid. I wanted to be a volunteer counsellor because when I came here as a Grade 3 student I had a cool counsellor. I have good memories as a kid running around in the forest, playing tag.



I've learned more volunteering at Cheakamus than any other experience at any point in my life. Volunteering has taught me to be empathetic, and to work with other people; and to discover what I'm good at and what I want to do for the rest of my life. I think one of the most valuable skills I've learned is how to work with people. I've learned how to motivate, teach and mentor all kinds of different people – people who are different than me, or like me. I have gained a bigger appreciation for the outdoors and now my life is going in the direction where this is what I want to do for the rest of my life. I didn't know that when I came here in Grade 10 as a counsellor for the first time.



High school is not a place where it is cool to sing a song about a salmon or make a secret handshake with a bunch of 12-year olds. But Outdoor School is a place where it is welcomed. Working here I'm surrounded by people who think it is cool to go hiking on weekends or spend time looking at birds. This has given me a greater appreciation for the environment. Cheakamus is a place that has always been a special place to go back to."

Temma "Poppy" Shandon, Counsellor Supervisor, Outdoor School Program; President, North Vancouver Outdoor School Alumni

CHEAKAMUS CENTRE

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

50 Years - 50 Faces: February



"16 years ago, I attended ODS in the third grade as a camper, and I still remember my counsellor, making friends, running through the forest, and holding baby chicks. I looked up to my counsellor so much and knew that I wanted to return to ODS and counsel too!"

I attended nine-times as a counsellor from grade ten to twelve. Being a counsellor instilled great confidence in me and equipped me with many life-long skills including leadership, problem solving skills, teamwork and creativity to teach children in ways that resonate with them.

The experience gained, assisted me in my future jobs working with children as an inclusion coordinator, support worker, and movement therapist. I was awarded the North Vancouver Outdoor School Society scholarship in 2012. This aided me in paying for my tuition at Simon Fraser University, and I am appreciative of that to this day! Currently,

I am completing a master's degree in Occupational Therapy and look forward to continuing to work with children, which all started when I decided to be an ODS counsellor! I look back on my time at Outdoor School and feel so grateful that I was able to participate in such a unique program, make new friends and spend time in nature.

The memories I made are some of my fondest memories from elementary and high school! "

Ciara McDaniel, former grade 3 student (2003); nine-time Outdoor School program counsellor (2009-2010)



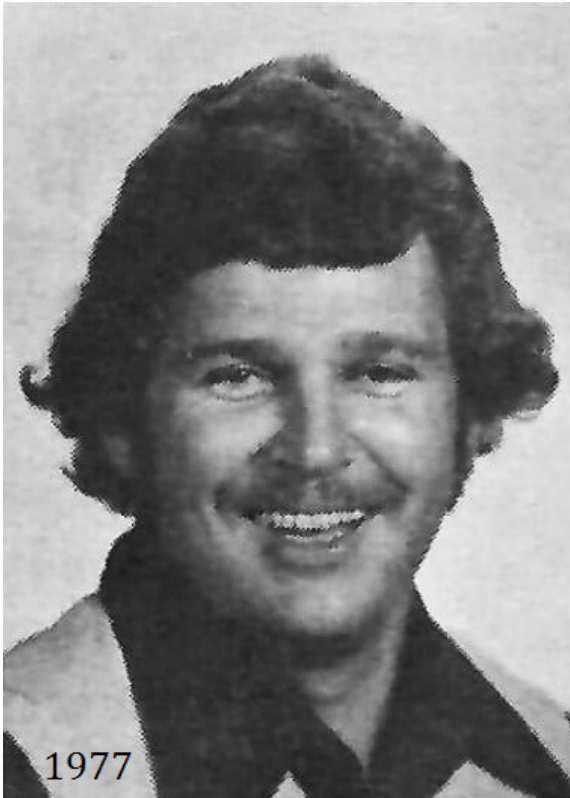
"I was lucky enough to spend nearly 3 months at the Cheakamus Center back in 2015. I still remember some of the highlights: watching the birth of 10 piglets, tapping maple trees with the chef, and seeing countless eagles along the river, to name a few.

These experiences influenced my own teaching practice where I try to take the kids outside as much as possible. I am really grateful for my time spent at Cheakamus. It is a special place!

I wish more districts across the province were lucky enough to have such an amazing facility."

Maymie Tegart, Teacher, K-6, Blue River Elementary School, School District 73, 2019 Recipient of Premier's Award for Excellence in Education: Outstanding Teacher Award

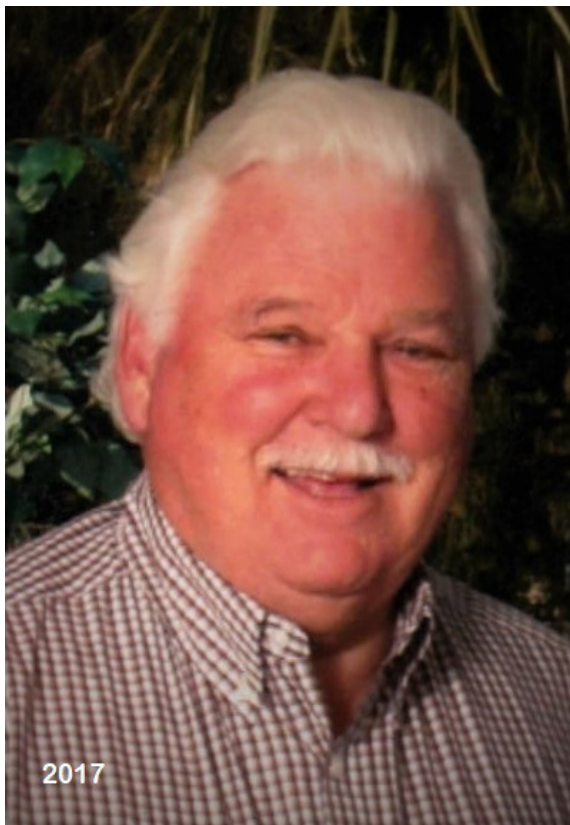
50 Years - 50 Faces: January



"The Outdoor School was born out of the interest and enthusiasm of North Vancouver Grade 6 and 7 teachers in the early 1970's. At that time, I was the Science Curriculum Coordinator for the School District. My teacher training in New Zealand emphasized the out-of-doors as a curriculum resource, so it was a natural step for me to encourage teachers to take their classes outside as part of their science studies.

The spring of 1969 saw the first group of students embark on a week-long foray into the out-of-doors. The Vancouver newspapers covered School Board meetings in those days and they quickly recognized a human-interest story and reported extensively on our unique venture. It followed that the Grade 6 and 7 teachers in North Vancouver clamoured to have their classes involved in the same experience.

The pieces came together when the Superintendent of Schools, Bill Lucas, found that Paradise Valley Resort was available for midweek use. 1970 saw classes at the Outdoor School in the spring and the fall, and it soon became necessary for me to expand the program to the full school year when Grade 6 & 7 classes would come to Paradise Valley for a 5-night residence.



With groups of dedicated people, the Outdoor School slowly developed over the years to include a barn with farm animals, an apiary, a salmon hatchery, a First Nations Long House, a network of trails, the canoe pond and other outdoor recreational activities. Much of what we did to enhance the learning experience was unconventional and must have raised eyebrows at the School Board. However, they were 40 miles away and they trusted us to provide a safe and vital learning experience for North Vancouver students.

I continued as Director until 1985, with a short absence to teach for DND. The devotion of countless employees and volunteers cemented the programme as an integral part of SD 44's legacy. What started as a desire for teachers to use the out-of-doors as a learning tool has become a critical experience for the youth of today in their quest knowledge about and care for the environment. The 50th anniversary of the Outdoor School stands as a testament to the passion and hard work of all who have been involved."

Don "Kiwi" Robertson, founder of the North Vancouver Outdoor School (1970 - 1985)

50 Years - 50 Faces: January

“My role and years involved with the Outdoor School date back to its very inception. Don Robertson had arrived from New Zealand in the late 1960’s and began to establish his very impressive vision of an outdoor school for School District 44. I was a teacher at Hamilton Junior Secondary School at the time and was made aware of Don’s initiative by one of the sciences teachers at Hamilton. We took a group of students to the Outdoor School and were accommodated at Evans Lake Forestry Centre Camp because the accommodation at the school itself was fully booked ... it was a terrific experience! This was my first of many trips accompanying students to the Outdoor School as a teacher and later as a Principal.

In the 1990’s my role changed when I was an Assistant Superintendent for the School District and, among many other things, I was overseeing the operations of the school. During that time, my main activity involved a two-year process of negotiating with Nature Conservancy Canada to establish a protective covenant on the property in exchange for a variety of sources of support of the school.

My final role with the Outdoor School prior to retirement was to assist two of the school district’s music teachers in re-establishing a summer band camp that had existed a few years earlier at the school. My role, then, was varied and changed over the years. Throughout it all I was a keen supporter of the Outdoor School and I remain so today.

The North Vancouver Outdoor School enables students to enjoy “hands-on” experiences with their environment that simply cannot be replicated in a classroom. I believe those experiences provide a foundation upon which students are able to develop sound environmental values as they grow older.

I place a high value on the school that Don Robertson conceptualized, operationalized and administered onto the sound footing that has enabled it to remain a very important component of the North Vancouver School District today.”

John Montgomery, retired assistant superintendent of the North Vancouver School District.



50 Years - 50 Faces: January



“This year I share my 50th birthday with Outdoor School. A place that has become an integral part of who I am. In 1977, I was part of the first grade two class to ever spend the night at Outdoor School. Visiting again in grade six, my fire was stoked. This was the kind of place I wanted to be. In 1986, I had my first week as a counsellor at NVOS. I would go on to counsel twenty-nine more times, a record that stood for more than twenty years. That passion for Outdoor School led to assisting with counsellor training sessions, and with others in 1987, I was a founding member of the NVOS Alumni Society. Serving on the Alumni Executive for many years we became a society, and later a registered charity. This allowed the Alumni to set up a Bursary Fund to ensure all kids from North Vancouver had a chance to experience Outdoor School. It also allowed us to be organized to mount two successful campaigns to save Outdoor School from closing due to funding issues. In 1988, I worked casually at the school while attending university. Summers were a wonderful time at NVOS with Band Camp, Burn Camp, Artists for Kids camps, Camp Horizon and Japanese environmental exchange camps. Hired as the Matron (not being very matronly they changed that to “student support assistant” soon after) I started full time at NVOS in 1992 - living on site, involved in the 24/7 operations of the school, and later the Head Secretary. I left in 2000 to start a family in North Vancouver. When I look around the school now I still see little parts of myself everywhere. The campfire pit I helped to build, my face cast in concrete outside the old main building, trails we cut, and the dent in the wood shed room where I hit it with the dump truck. The siding from my childhood home still covers the fire safety shelters throughout the property. Proud to be gifted the name of “Wountie” by the Skw’unc-was elders, I had the pleasure of being a parent elder for 5 different groups, including for both of my own children. I have been stopped on the street as far away as London, England by people who I shared experiences with at Outdoor School. The place and lessons were still with them, and will always remain with me.”

Doug “Tor” Peake, founding member of the North Vancouver Alumni Society (Est. 1987)

50 Years - 50 Faces: January

“How do you describe a life-time? For me that can be summed up in four words, North Vancouver Outdoor School. Those four words are a spell, when I think about them or utter them aloud, like Cheakamus they are intertwined with, the words conjure forth a flood of impressions and memories packed with feelings and emotions, it fills me up and will always sustain me. That flood is a torrent of gratitude and profound thankfulness that a school district would have the courage and foresight to establish such a place; a well-spring of inspiration for hundreds of thousands of learners young and old. I can’t be thankful enough for the opportunity to teach and be the Principal of North Vancouver Outdoor School (Cheakamus Centre). Cheakamus Centre, like the line from Field of Dreams, “if you build it they will come” is an embodiment of what is possible when nature extends its enticements, opening its heart and spirit to humans that are smart enough to embrace the invitation as they create an enduring centre of imagination, learning; a place to develop understanding. Personally, I continue to be humbled by this place; the people that came into and remain in my life because it exists; precious natural gifts that presented themselves to me every moment I was and am there; the continuum of learning I receive that informs me and a multitude of others daily; and it’s promising legacy for the future. I am Outdoor School and Outdoor School is me!”

Victor “Sky” Elderton, past principal and co-administrator of the North Vancouver Outdoor School (1984-2013)

