

PORTFOLIO

Diane Mitchell

2018 - 2021

diane@redrockcreative.ca

SEA TO SKY GONDOLA

Interpretive signage developed in 2019 for the main Summit Lodge viewing deck. Four panels exploring the natural landscape. Graphic design by client.

Responsible for theming, research, writing and proofing.

<https://www.seatoskygondola.com>



“Diane led the content development for our interpretive signage boards overlooking Howe Sound. Through copy and imagery, she was able to create content that was both educational and entertaining without competing with the natural views. Diane is a pleasure to work with and gets projects completed on time, on budget while exceeding expectations..”

CHRISTY ALLAN, MARKETING MANAGER, SEA TO SKY GONDOLA

BATHING IN A FOREST BASIN

Heal Your Heart. Soothe Your Soul. Will You Soak It Up?

Imagine strolling through a forest. Birds chirp. Dappled sunlight warms your face. You stop and sit awhile, tuning your senses to the nature enveloping you. Slowly but surely you relax. You are Forest Bathing.

The Japanese art of Shinrin-yoku, or Forest Bathing, is like a health and wellness reset button. When your senses feast on the forest, your body and mind can heal from tensions in daily life.

Science has shown that being in nature lowers the stress hormone cortisol. This leads to benefits, such as lower blood pressure. Anti-microbial essential oils released by some conifers can also boost the immune system.

Nature can soothe, heal and restore if given the chance — which leaves just one question to ask. Will you soak up nature and bring Forest Bathing into your own life?

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Close your eyes. Listen — really listen — to the sound of running water. What else can you hear?



Look for a fungi, fern or flower. Crouch next to it and focus on its beautiful, intricate detail.



Run your hands over a bed of moss. Feel its softness between your fingers. Notice how your hand molds over it.



Close your eyes and slowly breathe in the smell of nature. Notice if the smells calm you.



LIVING IN QUIET TIMES

Born of Fire. Carved by Ice. What Comes Next?

Picture the scene twenty thousand years ago. A huge glacier fills the valley below. Only the tallest mountains are seen. A volcano erupts nearby, its huge ash cloud reaching for the sky.

This Coast Mountain landscape is one hundred million years old, born from the immense geological forces of the Pacific Ring of Fire. The last four million years have seen eruptions from many local peaks that are either now extinct or dormant volcanoes. There may well be eruptions in the future, although scientists do not know for certain.

Ice has covered the land often in the last two million years. In fact, fifteen thousand years ago, the ice was two kilometres thick. Look for the tall, jagged mountains. Only they were ice free. All others were eroded by ice.

Climate change is impacting glaciation today. What the distant future millennia will bring is unknown though. It is possible that ice may one day smother this land again, creating an entirely new landscape for life to call home.



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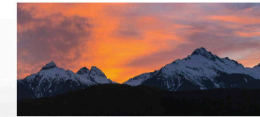
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In summer, heavy clouds can be blue-green, caused by glacial silt. Glaciers erode the dirt from mountains. The silt is then washed into the sea.



North Point is an old volcano that erupted around one hundred thousand years ago. Today it is a quarry for railway ballast.



The horizon between the jagged and rounded peaks marks the maximum height of ice during the last glacial period, around fifteen thousand years ago.



MALAHAT SKYWALK

Interpretive signage developed for this new \$17 million visitor attraction. The visitor experience takes in an elevated walkway and viewing tower, along with Indigenous art. Over twenty panels exploring the natural landscape of the area and the connection to the traditional and contemporary local Coast Salish communities.

Responsible for interpretive planning, theming, research, writing and proofing.

Worked collaboratively with Panther Creative on panel design.

<https://malahatskywalk.com> (Opening summer 2021)



© Malahat Skywalk

“Interpretive signage is a balance between art and science in order to keep the reader engaged. Diane has proven to be a master at establishing that balance and creating fun, yet interpretive site plans and educational signage.

Her research and laser focus on details is second to none. Working with Diane on the Malahat Skywalk project has been a fantastic experience and the result of her work our guests will enjoy for many years to come.”

KEN BAILEY, GENERAL MANAGER, MALAHAT SKYWALK

LIVING BY THE MOON

Would you be amazed by someone telling the time by watching the tide?

For millennia, the W̱SÁNEĆ / Saanich People lived their lives by the tides and lunar cycles. In a time of no grocery stores, this meant the difference between life or death. And they thrived.

The W̱SÁNEĆ knew when the herring would return, or when to store their canoes before winter gales blew through. Their territory was land and sea, shoreline and forest, creek and open water. Knowing where to be and when to be there, was crucial.

Living by the Thirteen Moons helped the W̱SÁNEĆ thrive. Each 'Moon' or lunar cycle brings a change in weather, plant growth or animal activity. Each change brings a new food to harvest or season to adapt to. By intricately understanding these cycles, they were able to live sustainably and successfully on this land.

Most of us could only dream of being so in tune with nature.

IMPOSSIBLE MALAHAT HIGHWAY

What do you do when the government tells you a route across difficult terrain is impossible? If you are Major James MacFarlane – you prove them wrong.

Major MacFarlane believed a road over the Malahat was possible. The government did not, having spent forty years failing to find one.

As a local farmer, and former military man from Ireland, Major MacFarlane spent three years hauling his determined self over the hills between Duncan and Goldstream. He found the only possible route. He did this with just a compass, measuring tape and aneroid barometer to measure elevation. Quite the feat for a man with no formal surveying training.

His determination paid off. Finally the government agreed and built the road. When it opened in 1911, the Major was the first to drive end to end.

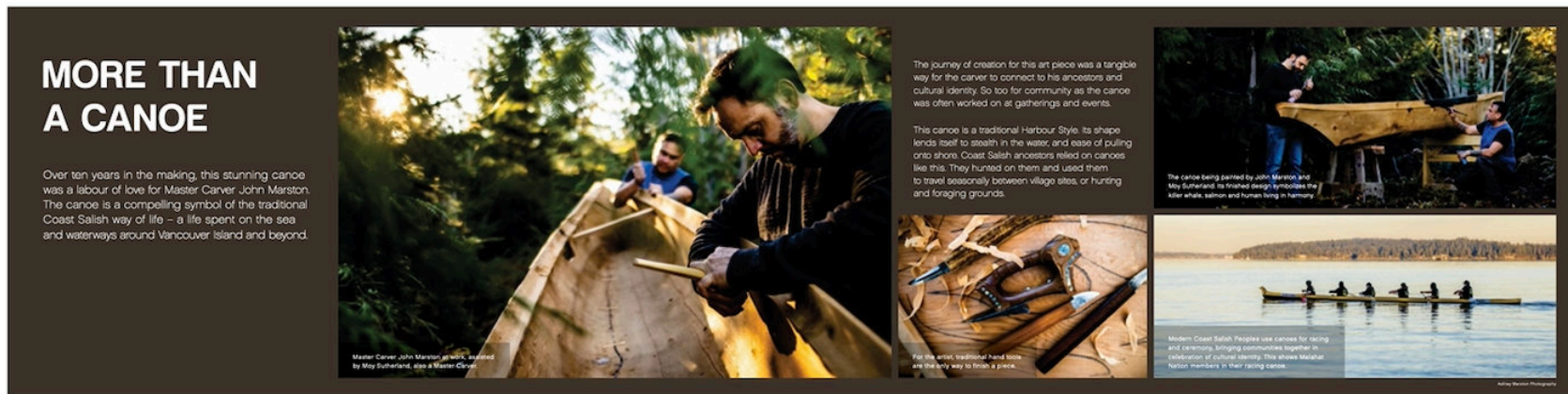


MORE THAN A CANOE

Over ten years in the making, this stunning canoe was a labour of love for Master Carver John Marston. The canoe is a compelling symbol of the traditional Coast Salish way of life – a life spent on the sea and waterways around Vancouver Island and beyond.

The journey of creation for this art piece was a tangible way for the carver to connect to his ancestors and cultural identity. So too for community as the canoe was often worked on at gatherings and events.

This canoe is a traditional Harbour Style. Its shape lends itself to stealth in the water, and ease of pulling onto shore. Coast Salish ancestors relied on canoes like this. They hunted on them and used them to travel seasonally between village sites, or hunting and foraging grounds.



Panel to accompany a hand-carved canoe

THE THUNDERING PROW

At first glance here, you will see Thunderbird, the powerful and fearsome protector of this land. Look closer to discover the equally powerful relationship between an artist and the water that beckons his Coast Salish community.

Master Carver John Marston is drawn to canoes. They are a symbol of the way his Coast Salish culture is tied to the sea. When creating this sculpture with Master Carver Moy Sutherland, the beauty and grace of a traditional dugout canoe inspired its design. With every curve and texture, both artists connect to a vibrant cultural identity that is rooted in tradition and thrives in the present.

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Reaching skywards, Thunderbird points one wing forward and one backwards. He is revered by Coast Salish peoples. So too are the salmon shown in the wings of this enduring legend.

From every angle viewed, each hand-carved and graceful curve reflects the prow of a canoe. That is not all though. The charred back of the sculpture is a traditional method that seals the wood and at times was part of the carving process.

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Walk around the sculpture to better discover this stunning work of art.

Panel to accompany a hand-carved Thunderbird sculpture

MUSEUM OF NORTH VANCOUVER

Interpretive signage developed for the exhibit that showcases their iconic Streetcar 153. Six panels illustrating the history of the streetcar and its association with the development of North Vancouver.

Responsible for writing and proofing.

Worked collaboratively with the client on research and theming, and with Panther Creative on layout.

<https://monova.ca> (Opening fall 2021)



© MONOVA

AND SO GREW NORTH VANCOUVER

Electrified homes and a streetcar system turned North Vancouver into a real estate hot-spot. No longer would locals have to look longingly to the glittering lights of Vancouver.

Want to work in Vancouver and live affordably? Look no further than 1910 North Vancouver. A streetcar would take you to the ferry wharf for your commute across the inlet. Want to build your own home? A lot would cost you less than a thousand dollars.

Have friends in Vancouver who visit on the weekends? No problem. Ride with them to the end of a streetcar line, then hike the mountainside to experience nature at its best.

It was this combination that made North Vancouver unique. Its success saw the community grow and grow..

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By 1926, North Vancouver was taking shape. This view up Lonsdale Avenue shows just how much it had grown. NVMA 5120

In 1912, these homes under construction on East 28th Street were near the terminus of the Lonsdale Line. NVMA 11041

Commuters and day trippers made up much of the pedestrian traffic at the ferry wharf at the foot of Lonsdale Avenue, ca 1912. NVMA 4171

Quitting time at Burrard Dry Dock in 1945. Wet-time shipbuilding efforts kept the streetcars busy carrying employees to and from work. NVMA 27-679

“Lots fronting on 14th St, \$900 each. One-half block from principal carline of the city. Electric lights, telephones and city water available.”
Advertisement in *The Express* 1910

BRITANNIA MINE MUSEUM

Interpretive signage developed for Howe Sound: Beauty Below temporary exhibit in 2018. The exhibit was curated in collaboration with Howe Sound dive photographers Eli Wolpin and Adam Taylor.

This exhibit was developed as part of Diane's role as Curator of Education & Collections at the Museum.

<https://www.britanniaminemuseum.ca>



© Britannia Mine Museum

“Diane has a gift for writing.”

ELI WOLPIN, PHOTOGRAPHER & EXHIBIT COLLABORATOR

WHYTECLIFF PARK

Breathe in....breathe out....breathe in....and out.... There you go. In the moment. Calm.

Beneath the waves, the bustle of daily life vanishes. You are just another curious animal. Hey, you just got hip-checked by a seal.

A Marine Protected Area since 1993, Whytecliff is cared for by a passionate community of divers and scientists. Yet poachers and unwitting boaters cause fragility. Its protected status is not even permanent.

Recovery in protected areas spreads beyond its boundaries. This leads to a healthier ecosystem and higher fishing yields. This is seen at Whytecliff.

In a province with a strong natural resource sector, balance is crucial. We must continue to learn from the past and improve our knowledge, so that we can have both a healthy environment and a healthy economy.

WHYTECLIFF PARK

***“Making the world a better place,
one no-take marine protected
sanctuary at a time.”***

Marine Life Sanctuaries Society

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BRITANNIA BEACH

“There’s life in the old girl yet.”

Oh Britannia, your once barren shores had such a tale to tell. Battered by pollution, they were the tip of the iceberg for what lay beneath.

But oh Britannia, how you have changed. Those who dive your waters today find life flourishing. Not yet as much as elsewhere, but your community is proud of how far you have come in the last decade.

Nature is resilient. It has slithered, swam, crept and crawled its way back into your underwater nooks and crannies.

You are home to at least sixteen species that were not there before. You have biodiversity again.

We want to help keep it that way.

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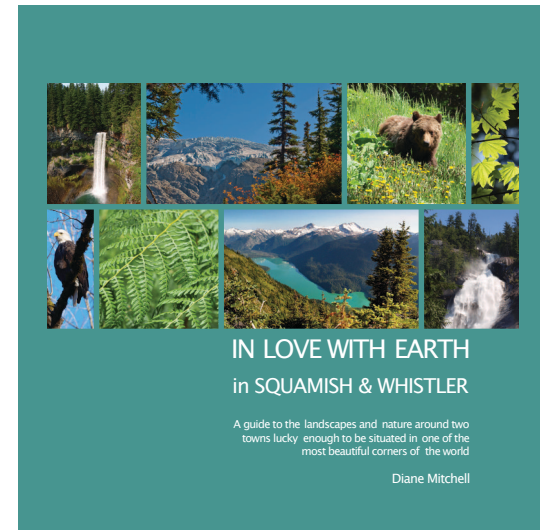
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BOOK: In Love With Earth in Squamish & Whistler

In 2015, Diane Mitchell self-published a ninety-seven page guide to the flora and fauna around Squamish and Whistler, BC. Three hundred copies were sold at local bookstores and retailers.

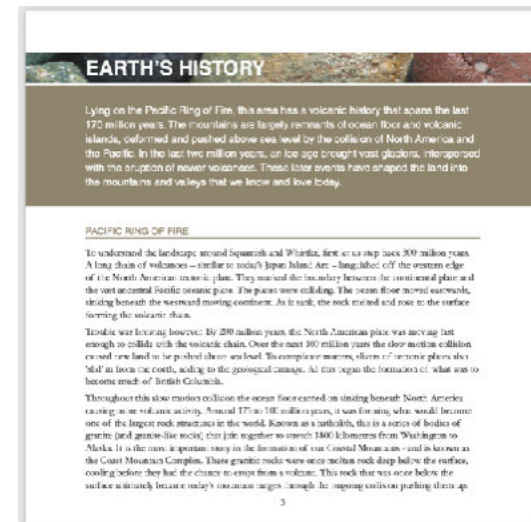
“A treasure for those curious about the mountains and rock of the Sea to Sky Corridor. Local geology is also key to understanding the plants, animals and fungi one meets along the many roads, trails and rivers. Complex ideas explained in layperson’s language. A book to keep in your car and backpack.”

MEG FELLOWS, SQUAMISH NATURALIST



EARTH’S HISTORY

Lying on the Pacific Ring of Fire, this area has a volcanic history that spans the last 170 million years. The mountains are largely remnants of ocean floor and volcanic islands, deformed and pushed above sea level by the collision of North America and the Pacific. In the last two million years, an ice age brought vast glaciers, interspersed with the eruption of newer volcanoes. These later events have shaped the land into the mountains and valleys that we know and love today.



PACIFIC RING OF FIRE

To understand the landscape around Squamish and Whistler, first let us step back 300 million years. A long chain of volcanoes – similar to today’s Japan Island Arc – languished off the western edge of the North American tectonic plate. They marked the boundary between the continental plate and the vast ancestral Pacific oceanic plate. The plates were colliding. The ocean floor moved eastwards, sinking beneath the westward moving continent. As it sank, the rock melted and rose to the surface forming the volcanic chain.

Trouble was brewing however. By 200 million years, the North American plate was moving fast enough to collide with the volcanic chain. Over the next 100 million years the slow motion collision caused new land to be pushed above sea level. To complicate matters, slivers of tectonic plates also ‘slid’ in from the north, adding to the geological carnage. All this began the formation of what was to become much of British Columbia.

Throughout this slow motion collision the ocean floor carried on sinking beneath North America causing more volcanic activity. Around 175 to 100 million years, it was forming what would become one of the largest rock structures in the world. Known as a batholith, this is a series of bodies of granite (and granite-like rocks) that join together to stretch 1800 kilometres from Washington to Alaska. It is the most important story in the formation of our Coastal Mountains – and is known as the Coast Mountain Complex. These granitic rocks were once molten rock deep below the surface, cooling before they had the chance to erupt from a volcano. This rock that was once below the surface ultimately became today’s mountain ranges through the ongoing collision pushing them up.