

PORTFOLIO

Diane Mitchell

2019 - 2024

Exhibits

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CLIENT & PROJECT LIST

This list is not exhaustive. Includes both completed and current projects.

Sea to Sky Gondola (2019)

- Summit Lodge deck: interpretive signage
- Spiral Tower: interpretive plan

Malahat Skywalk (2020-2022)

- Interpretive plan
- Interpretive signage *(with Panther Creative)*

MONOVA (2020)

- Streetcar 153 exhibit: content development *(with Panther Creative)*

Lloydminster Museum & Archives (2020)

- Exhibit: theme and content development *(with Panther Creative)*

Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History (2021-2022)

- Pjila'si exhibit: theme and content development *(with Panther Creative)*

City of Richmond (2021)

- London Heritage Farm: interpretive signage

District of Squamish (2021-2024)

- Visitor Centre/Squamish Story exhibit: interpretive plan
- Exhibit content development *(with Panther Creative)*

District of Lake Country (2022)

- Indigenous Cultural Centre & Park: foundational framework *(with D Jensen & Associates)*; interpretive planning *(with Panther Creative)*

McAbee Fossil Beds (2022)

- Interpretive trails: theming and content development *(with InterpretDesign)*

Prince Rupert Port Authority (2022)

- Port Interpretive Centre: content development *(with Panther Creative)*

Metro Vancouver (2022)

- Waste to Energy facility exhibit/tour: content development *(with Panther Creative)*

Anchorage Central Transfer Station (2022)

- Interpretive writer *(with Doug Munday Design)*

Squamish Oceanfront Development (2023-2024)

- Interpretive planner

Niagara Peninsula Conservation Areas (2023)

- Interpretive planner & writer *(with Cygnus Design Group)*

Fort Rodd Hill National Historic Site; Upper Battery (2023) and Lower Battery (2024)

- Outdoor signage: theme and content development *(with Panther Creative)*

Inspiring Local Champions: Terry Fox (2023-2024)

- Exhibit: theme and content development *(with Panther Creative)*, and curatorial oversight (City of Port Coquitlam/PoCo Heritage)

Howe Sound Biosphere Region Initiative Society (2023-2024)

- Communications theme development
- Tourism sector online course development

New Pathways to Gold; Cariboo Wagon Road Kiosk Signage (2024)

- Interpretive advisor and editor

Tumbler Ridge Museum (2024)

- Digital exhibit plan development: theme and project management

Cheakamus Centre (2024)

- Interpretive planner

Clayoquot Biosphere Centre (2024)

- Interpretive planner

Prior to working as a freelance consultant, Diane spent over two decades in the museum sector, working on many exhibits and interpretive projects at the National Museums Scotland and the Britannia Mine Museum. These included being content lead on several award-winning capital projects.

MALAHAT SKYWALK

Interpretive signage developed for this \$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>



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“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

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.



© Panther Creative

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

LONDON HERITAGE FARM

Interpretive signage developed for this City of Richmond heritage site.

Responsible for theme development, research, writing and proofing.

(Installation in early 2023)

<https://www.richmond.ca>



“Diane was great to work with – thorough with her research, helpful communication throughout the project, and patient through our onerous review process. I particularly appreciated the voice that she brings to her writing. We all felt that she struck exactly the right tone for our audience. I highly recommend her to others in the museum and heritage sector or for any other interpretive project.”

REBECCA CLARKE, MANAGER, MUSEUM AND HERITAGE SERVICES,
CITY OF RICHMOND

WHEN YOU GOTTA GO

The year is 1900. It is after midnight and the wind rattles your window. You really need to poop. There is no warm bathroom, flush toilet or hot tap for you. You sigh, slip your feet in cold boots, wrap a coat around you and head to the outhouse — watching for bats as you go.

Today, most of us take running water for granted. That would have been a dream in early Richmond when an outdoor pit toilet was the bathroom. It stank in summer and was freezing in winter.

Homes also lacked piped water to wash your hands after...or to wash your clothes, take a bath or to drink and cook with.

Some families like the Londons had water towers. Others who sold milk in Vancouver brought their milk cans back full of water. Many others used rain barrels for drinking water. But for those who forgot to check the barrel for dead rodents or mosquito larvae, they might have found a nasty surprise in their cup of tea.

Water for washing usually came from the silt-rich river or ditches. The residents must have been very grateful when piped water was finally installed in 1930.



THOSE EVIL BIRDS

Well, that was interesting. You went to a lecture about these pesky birds. But instead of hearing about the bounty on birds that most farmers want, you heard instead about how they are actually good for the farm.

In the late 1800s, farmers saw pests everywhere. If a plant was not grown for harvest, it was a weed to be removed. If an animal was not livestock or could support the farm, it was a pest to be destroyed.

The two biggest animal pests were insects and birds. Farmers hated birds for eating their seeds or fruit crops. Crows were seen as the biggest offenders. The birds were shot at, and farmers wanted to see a bounty brought in to help bring bird numbers down.

Through the 1890s, there was effort from the government to share new scientific knowledge. Yes, birds did eat seeds and fruit, but their diet was heavy on the very insects that attacked the crops. Farmers were encouraged to “generously overlook their sins in consideration of the undoubted good they do.”

Today, the role of birds in the ecosystem is known. With farmers no longer shooting them, the area is now a haven for many species of birds.



HABITAT CHANGED FOREVER

Your older brother wades into the slough to catch a salmon. You stay on land though. Far. Too. Cold. With the new dike being built to cut the slough off from the river, you wonder how many more fish he will catch in the future.

This area was largely prairie grass and marshland before it was settled by immigrants. Salmon spawning grounds were found in sloughs on the south of Lulu Island. These sloughs were used by Coast Salish Peoples for fishing and travelling.

Coast Salish Peoples harvested from the land too. Wild crabapple, salal, blueberries and cranberries were found across the islands. They also harvested berries from the bogs, using fire to keep the soil fertile and keep the berry areas clear of encroaching scrub brush and pine trees. This tradition was continued by later residents.

The habitat changed forever after diking of land to limit floods. The settlers infilled sloughs as they did not know the ecological value of these waterways. Add the pesticides and fungicides that the farmers believed were the only way to control pests, and the ecosystem was damaged.

Decades of lessons learned have taught Western society the value of balance, something the Coast Salish Peoples have known for millennia.



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>



© Panther Creative

“Diane took my content suggestions and brought the streetcar stories to life through her writing. Her narratives are direct and approachable, with a focus on visitor engagement. Diane told me that she regularly asks herself ‘who cares?’ in order to create text that flows well and delivers relevant information that visitors will care about. In addition, Diane was easy to work with and responded promptly to all queries and communications.”

NANCY KIRKPATRICK, FORMER DIRECTOR & STREETCAR EXHIBIT COLLABORATOR, 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 23rd Street were near the terminus of the Lonsdale Line. NVMA 11041.

Quitting time at Burrard Dry Dock in 1945. Wreath-making efforts kept the streamers busy carrying employees to and from work. NVMA 27-679.

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.

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

McABEE FOSSIL BEDS HERITAGE SITE

Interpretive signage developed for the Bonaparte First Nation and BC Heritage Branch.

Responsible for theme development, research, writing and proofing.

Worked collaboratively with Interpret Design (prime contractor) on panel design.

(Installation in spring 2023)



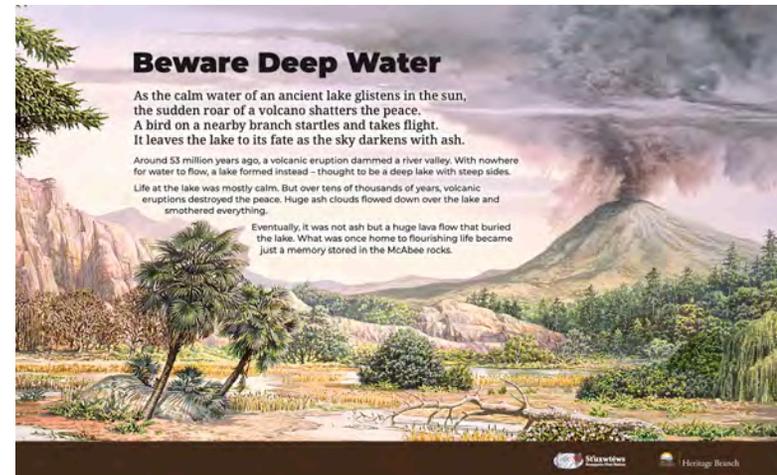
BEWARE DEEP WATER

As the calm water of an ancient lake glistens in the sun, the sudden roar of a volcano shatters the peace. A bird on a nearby branch startles and takes flight. It leaves the lake to its fate as the sky darkens with ash.

Around 53 million years ago, a volcanic eruption dammed a river valley. With nowhere for water to flow, a lake formed instead – thought to be a deep lake with steep sides.

Life at the lake was mostly calm. But over tens of thousands of years, volcanic eruptions destroyed the peace. Huge ash clouds flowed down over the lake and smothered everything.

Eventually, it was not ash but a huge lava flow that buried the lake. What was once home to flourishing life became just a memory stored in the McAbee rocks.



SURVIVAL IN STONE

A dying crayfish slows to a final stop on the lakebed. In the stillness, no bacteria or scavengers feast on the carcass. As an algal bloom from the lake above settles over the crayfish, its future becomes set in stone.

The Eocene-aged lake that existed here was the resting place for layers of volcanic ash and fine silt. There were also times when blooms of algae called diatoms flourished in the calm waters instead. Their microscopic glass-like skeletons settled onto the lakebed and built up in layers.



STAYING WARM IN WINTER

Our ancestors spent winter in warm pithouses with their extended families.

When the cold winds blew and the snow fell it was time for our ancestors to head to their pithouses. Together with family, they could wait out bad weather with a fire in the hearth and a cache of food gathered through the year stored nearby. Often there were pithouse villages where a community wintered together.

Pithouses were winter homes for over four thousand years – being used as late as the 1800s. They were built in sheltered spots near rivers or the treeline though their design and size evolved over time as needs changed.

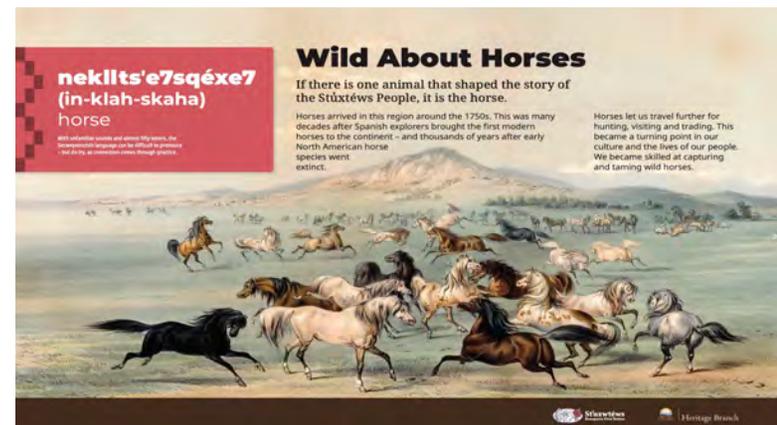


WILD ABOUT HORSES

If there is one animal that shaped the story of the Stuxtéws People, it is the horse.

Horses arrived in this region around the 1750s. This was many decades after Spanish explorers brought the first modern horses to the continent – and thousands of years after early North American horse species went extinct.

Horses let us travel further for hunting, visiting and trading. This became a turning point in our culture and the lives of our people. We became skilled at capturing and taming wild horses.



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>



“I was fortunate to work with Diane on two projects at the Sea to Sky Gondola. The first project scope included developing a master interpretive plan for the proposed Sky Spiral at the summit. Diane was able to distill all of our suggested themes and brainstorm sessions into a succinct interpretive signage plan that the entire team approved of.

In the second project, 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

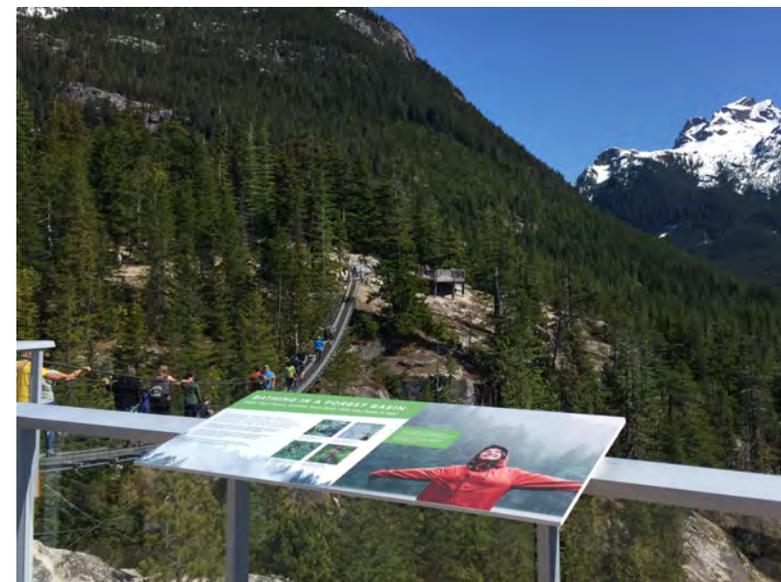
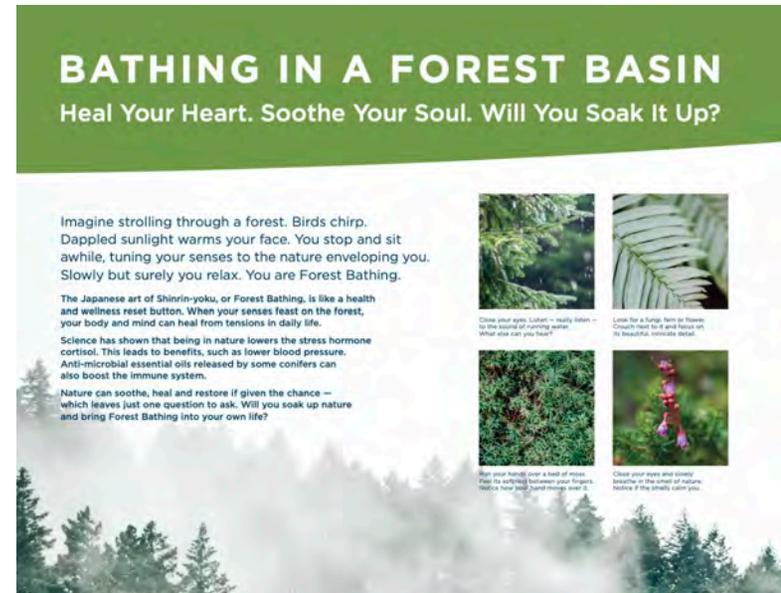
Heal Your Heart. Soothe Your Soul. Will You Soak It Up?

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?



ADDITIONAL TESTIMONIALS

“I found Diane had a deep understanding of an audience’s need to engage with a story in order to make sense out of any complex topic. She had the unique ability to sort through the volume of detail in any content to uncover a story thread that would make sense for the uninitiated.”

PHIL ALDRICH, FORMER PARTNER & FOUNDER, ALDRICH PEARS ASSOCIATES

“Diane had an excellent understanding of content materials and was a skilled communicator when required to transfer this information to others. Her dedication and enthusiasm for the work was an inspiration to us all. She is one of the best writers I’ve worked with.”

DAVID JENSEN, EXHIBIT DESIGNER, D JENSEN & ASSOCIATES

“Diane has a talent for education and interpretation/communication, borne out of a passion for meaningful engagement. In particular she has a real interest in communicating about the natural world. She cares that the finished project reflects the nuances behind the values and goals that shape every project. She has skill for project management and respects the collaborative process so that the best outcome is assured.”

KIRSTIN CLAUSEN, FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BRITANNIA MINE MUSEUM

See more at redrockcreative.ca

Learn more about Diane’s experience at [linkedin.com/in/dianehmitchell/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/dianehmitchell/)