

## The Dream Came True...



photo by Janet Neilsen

### Lori Treloar Executive Director

The Shawnigan Lake Historical Society was registered in 1977. The intention of the Society was to open a museum. After a few temporary locations, the Society took over the original Shawnigan Firehall, in 1984, and established a permanent museum. The concrete block building was perfect for a museum, but it soon became apparent that the story of Shawnigan was too big



photo by Kim Barnard

for the space. Although attempts were made to expand the museum in the 1980s, it didn't happen until now.

With a vigorous fundraising campaign, that took several years, their dream is now a reality.

We are thrilled to announce that the Shawnigan Lake Museum re-opened on July 26, 2025, after being mostly closed for over two years. This transformative construction project was designed to better serve our visitors and to showcase Shawnigan's rich history. The museum provides exhibits, events, and educational programming to inspire curiosity and to connect people to our shared heritage.

This ambitious expansion, dubbed **Project Impact**, was at least ten years in the making and began with a dream – then the fundraising – and finally, construction. The project added approximately 4000 square feet of new space and includes a full kitchen; interior washrooms; exterior public washrooms for the community; a library; programming and event space; storage; new exhibits showcasing E.J. Hughes, the Kinsol Trestle and the amazing story of Shawnigan Lake. The facility has also been upgraded for accessibility. The project reflects the museum's purpose to celebrate local history and culture through accessible and engaging education.

One of the most exciting aspects of the project is that with the help of the Chief Daniels, Johnny Crocker and other members of Cowichan Tribes, we now have some of their belongings on display, which have been repatriated from the Royal BC Museum. Over time, we will work together to highlight stories that they can share.

We're very excited to welcome our community and visitors back. This project has been a labour of love, made possible thanks to the generous support of funders, donors, volunteers, and local partners, over several years of planning.

As a nonprofit organization, the museum relies on community



## Meet me at the museum!

support to fulfill its mission, and grant writing to fund it. We are grateful for generous contributions from the Government of Canada; Destination BC; Island Coastal Economic Trust; the CVRD and the many donors that contributed to the expansion. The reality of the project started with a \$100,000 donation from long-time Museum volunteer, Garth Harvey, who believed in the value of the museum and the dream. Sadly, he isn't here to enjoy the moment. We also received a second donation of \$100k from a local family with a long-standing seasonal property on the Lake.

These contributions demonstrate a deep commitment to help preserve and share

Shawnigan's cultural heritage.

We would also like to recognize our dedicated team of talented volunteers who installed new exhibits; hung art; thoroughly cleaned the museum and exhibits; painted and so much more...we couldn't have done it without their help!

We hope to see you soon...opening hours are Tuesday – Saturday 9:30-3:30. Admission by donation.

Our Gift Shop is well stocked with many items, including local post cards (\$1). We accept cash, credit, debit or cheque.

[museum@shawniganlakemuseum.com](mailto:museum@shawniganlakemuseum.com)

[shawniganlakemuseum.com](http://shawniganlakemuseum.com)

250-743-8675



## Thank you to all of our advertisers for supporting this local publication! We couldn't do it without your help...

The Focus team encourages community members to submit editorial content, including letters; articles of local interest, bouquets you would like to offer to people; things that strike you as funny; challenges you want our civic leaders to consider; and/or ideas that would better our community. Letters to the Editor must be accompanied by the author's full name, address and phone number, but the contact information, other than the name, will not be published. Letters should be limited to 300 words and we reserve the right to edit for brevity or to refuse inappropriate or abusive language. Letters should attack issues - not individuals or groups.

Email: [shawniganfocuseditor@gmail.com](mailto:shawniganfocuseditor@gmail.com)



South Cowichan Library

Monica Finn  
South Cowichan Library  
250-743-5436  
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VIRLSouthCowichan

- Summer Reading Club Crafternoons are 2-4pm on Friday, Aug 8, and Friday, Aug 15. Prepare to create!
- There's a new Summer Reading Club Scavenger Hunt this month. Complete a form as you find the words for colours in Hul'q'umi'num' and turn in the form to select a prize.
- The Summer Reading Club for kids runs until August 20. Look for more events at the Cowichan Library in Duncan this month! Be sure to turn in your draw slips by Aug 26 for a chance at the grand prize.
- The Adult Summer Reading Challenge continues until the end of August. Don't forget to turn in completed bingo cards as well as draw slips by Wed, Sep 10.
- The Teen Summer Challenge runs until August 31.
- Library Mouse is still hiding in a new place each week! Let us know where you find Mouse

and pick out a sticker.

- Online Human Rights Book Club for Adults: the book for August is Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption by Bryan Stevenson. The book club meets online on Monday, Aug 25, 2:30-4pm. Register on the VIRL site--call or drop by if you have any questions.
- LEGO® Club happens every Tuesday, 2-5pm. We provide the LEGO (and Duplo) and you supply the imagination. Come ready to build! This is a free, drop-in event.
- Tech Help: Drop by or call to make an appointment for one-on-one help with a mobile device or laptop.
- Book a Librarian: available various days and times for a 1-on-1 session on using the library catalogue, downloading digital books and audiobooks, help researching, and more.

The South Cowichan Library in the Mill Bay Centre is open:

10am - 8pm, Monday and Tuesday

10am - 5pm, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, & Saturday

Shawnigan Focus Weather — July 2025

Stats courtesy of UVic Weather Network and Weather Underground  
Reported by Grant Treloar

	July	Cigarmaker's Bay		Butler Road		Discovery School		Museum		Shawnigan Average	
	Normal	2025	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024
Average High	23.3	28.6	29.4	26.9	27.6	26.7	20.7	28.2	28.3	27.6	26.5
Average Low	12.0	15.8	14.0	10.8	13.7	13.1	7.3	14.3	13.9	13.5	12.2
Extreme High	37.2	34.4	35.4	32.3	35.7	32.5	29.6	34.4	35.2	33.4	34.0
Extreme Low	3.9	10.3	10.5	7.5	9.6	9.8	2.8	11.8	10.5	9.9	8.4
Precipitation	23.2	0.0	18.8	0.0	14.2	0.0	53.0	0.0	14.0	0.0	25.0
Days w precip	6	0	1	0	1	0	9	0	1	0	3
Year Precip	654.9	629.7	799.7	513.6	602.3	476.2	654.0	434.0	606.5	513.4	665.6

2025 Rank since 1914: 4<sup>th</sup> warmest, tied for driest

Lake Readings	July 6	July 13	July 20	July 27
Temperature	23°	25°	24°	24°
Temperature 2024	24°	26°	26°	26°
Surface Elevation	116.11m	116.09m	116.05m	116.01m
Elevation 2024	116.19m	116.16m	116.13m	116.08m

Comments

July 2025 was the 4th time since 1914 that there was no rainfall during July. The last time this happened was only 4 years ago in 2021. Before that the last rain free July was in 1957.

Warmest day was on the the 15th, with temperatures approaching the mid 30s. There were no days of temperatures less than 22°. Coolest day was on the 3rd with a high of 22.6°and a low of 10.3°. There were 14 days when the themperature reached 30°or more.

So far the yearly total for rainfall is running about 80% of normal. The rest of the summer forecast indicate below average precipitation and above average temperatures.

The lake levels are being controlled by the weir just north of the end of the lake. The lake level is running slightly below long term averages at the beginning of August.

You may have noticed the difference in earlier sunset times since the beginning of July. This pattern will speed up during August. On August 1st, the sunset was 8:51 pm. During this month we will lose almost an hour, so that by the 31st, the sun will be going down at 7:57 pm.

The sun also loses 9°at its peak around 1pm dropping from 59°to 50° above the horizon.

Shawnigan Focus Team

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Socks Rock

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3 months ago, I started my 'hang a sock off your dock' campaign and about 130 socks have been distributed to various lakes and shorelines on Shawnigan lake.

Reports are the water is clear, and algae is getting smaller.

It's working!

My family's shoreline is crystal clear like it was when I was a kid. I can see the bottom of the lake. It's amazing. Friends of 30 years were commenting on it at our annual party. My wetland log booms slow the waves and create habitat for fish, and the blue heron hunts every day to get his breakfast.

Our property has a family of muskrats that moved into an old dock. They are eating my weeds. They nibble on the shoreline bushes which sometimes get away from them and then attach themselves to the shoreline therefore securing our shoreline at the new level of the lake since 1998. They raised the Weir by 2ft in 1998 if you weren't aware.

I didn't know we had muskrats but I am

appreciating them all the same as the shoreline is being restored, the water is clean and the weeds are gone. Thank you, muskrats.

I put socks in Quamichan lake at Art Mann Park and the difference is amazing...I can see the bottom of the lake and the algae blobs are nearly gone after 1 month. Charcoal really works and fast.

Let's keep doing this and make our lakes swimmable

again. Socks are still available off my logboom and roadside.

Thank you Shawnigan,

You can email to [laketrust@shaw.ca](mailto:laketrust@shaw.ca) if you want bulk socks.

"Change the world."

You can email to [laketrust@shaw.ca](mailto:laketrust@shaw.ca) if you want socks.

Watch my algae experiment at: <https://tinyurl.com/2bjf6wvn>

Community Building with the SLCA!

Marion Davies  
SLCC

This summer the Shawnigan Lake Community Association organized the Canada Day event in the Village and two Movies in the



Park evenings, one on Shawnigan Fields and the second will be August 9th at Kerry Park fields. The success of these events depends hugely on, first, the hard-working volunteers who help set up, clean up and run activities and, second, everyone who attends and participates in the fun.

A BIG Thank you goes partners in our community who contributed this summer: Shawnigan Fire crew, Eco Rotary, Shawnigan Garage, Staff at the SL Community Centre, Oma's Bakery, Cobble

Hill Scouting, CS Arts Guild, volunteers from the community and, of course, SLCA members!!

The SLCA focus their events on families and organize activities for all ages. They have built a large inventory of equipment and supplies from which they create the activities. Working together, creating together and sharing new ideas is rewarding and fun! Stepping up to volunteer brings new friendships, makes you feel you belong and instills pride in your community. We welcome



new ideas so anyone with a passion to create or want to have fun building events for our community check out the SLCA!

Our events are funded by successful applications to grant programs, including the Province of BC. These funds allow the SLCA to provide events without charging participants to attend. However, we encourage donations to the local food bank that serves our community!

Coming on October

26th is our Fall Festival and Market at the Community centre where we will Celebrate the Season with fun for all ages with a market to show off ambitions and products from our community, storytelling by the CS Arts Guild and a gym full of playful fun!

Contract us through our website: [shawniganlakecommunityassociation.ca](http://shawniganlakecommunityassociation.ca)

and feel good about helping to build a happy and fun community!

116th  
Cobble Hill  
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Saturday, August 23rd, 2025  
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Malahat Legion Events - August 2025

August is a quiet month at the Malahat Legion as our amazing volunteers take some well-deserved time off for vacations. Here's what's happening:

Regular Hours

- Fridays and Saturdays
- Bar 1:00-7:00 PM
  - Kitchen 1:00-4:30 PM Saturdays only

Drop-in Events

- Fridays
- Euchre – 2:00-4:00 PM
  - Mahjong – 1:00-3:30 PM

- Saturdays
- Meat Draws - 3:00-5:00 PM

Special Events:

Online reservations are now open for two exciting September events:

- Octoberfest dinner with Copper Canyon Band
- Fund raiser for South Cowichan Healthcare Auxiliary

Event calendar - <https://malahatlegion.ca/legion-published-calendars/>

More Legion events are available at [Upcoming Legion Events](#)





# Camp Shawnigan creates memories this summer while helping children with disabilities gain independence

July has flown by on the shores of Shawnigan Lake and what a beautiful summer it was. The weather was amazing, and the lake was full of activity—especially for children living with disabilities, and their families.

With over 400 campers coming from across Vancouver Island, this was one of our busiest seasons on record—every weekend was sold out! We held seven weeks of camp in total, including two adult camps, two kids’ camps, family camp, and an autism-focused camp in partnership with the Canucks Autism Network (CAN).

Camp Shawnigan offers much of what you would expect at overnight summer camp: talent shows, water sports, rock-climbing, are among the activities, and of course there is relationship building, which leads to lifelong friendships. But more importantly, Camp provides children with disabilities the opportunity to be included, to try new things, build their confidence and grow their independence—all in a safe, encouraging environment.

Kids and parents whose lives are built on routine with a lot of “no” or “sorry we can’t accommodate you” often tell us that camp is the one week of the year where all they hear is “YES!”

Angus is autistic and has certain



Angus (right) pictured with Camp counselors.

**Kids and parents whose lives are built on routine with a lot of “no” or “sorry we can’t accommodate you” often tell us that camp is the one week of the year where all they hear is “YES!”**

comforts and dietary needs that need accommodation. At first, his parents were apprehensive about what a week of camp would look like, because he had

never attended an overnight camp before. Angus’ mother Laura shared, “I was nervous because he hasn’t been away from home, and we wouldn’t be able to get to him in five minutes if something happened.”

But after meeting some of the team, the confidence and kindness radiating from the camp counselors reassured them that Angus was in safe hands. The camp’s 3:1 camper-to-staff ratio and two on staff nurses further eased their concerns, ensuring that Angus’ needs would be fully met—and he would have the time of his life.

As it turns out, Angus thrived at camp and by the end of his first summer, he had undergone a remarkable transformation. Reflecting on his time at Camp Shawnigan, he said, “If I go on to do great things in my life, it will be because of that camp.”

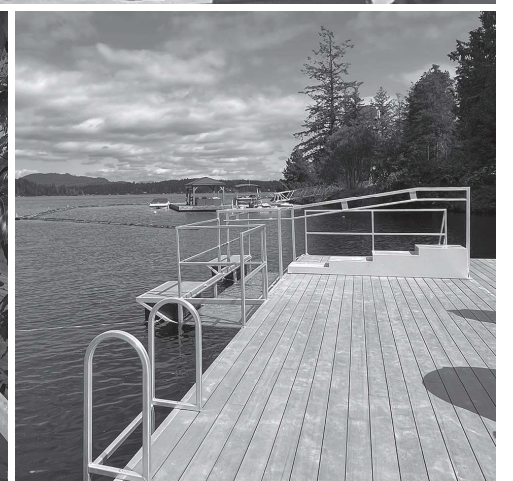
Angus is just one of many success stories that come out of Camp. A big reason for this is the staff—they do an amazing job of creating a magical and empowering experience for all who attend camp. And they truly understand and believe in the transformative power that inclusiveness and accessibility can have on a person’s life!

**For more information on Camp, visit [eastersealsbcy.ca](http://eastersealsbcy.ca)**





100 Men Who Care Cowichan Valley pictured with Lisa Beck.



# Easter Seals Camp Shawnigan adds new feature to providing accessibility to children with disabilities, and their families

When you live with a disability, doing everyday things—even small things—can represent a challenge. So imagine what it must be like to try and do something fun, adventurous or sporting—things like boating, kayaking or swimming.

“Just getting into the water can represent a significant challenge to someone living with a disability, let alone trying to get into a boat or kayak,” says Camp Director Dale Kilgor. “The physical challenge alone is daunting, not to mention the anxiety and mental stress it can cause those living with a visible or invisible disability.”

This summer, Camp Shawnigan took a monumental leap forward to address accessibility by installing a new dock. The state-of-the-art, purpose-built dock was unveiled on July 19 and is part of Phase One of their \$25 million dollar camp-rebuild project.

Over 100 individuals from the Shawnigan Lake community attended the unveiling, including several politicians, local counsel members, Camper families, staff and volunteers, as well as several chapters from local Vancouver Island Lions Clubs.

In fact, it was a few local Lion’s Club members who came across the Shawnigan property while boating on the lake in the 1970s. They saw a “For Sale” sign on the property, which led to the society purchasing it to provide a third location for summer camps for children with disabilities. And that is how Camp Shawnigan came to be

part of our organization—and remains a significant part of Lions Club’s legacy. “Without the Lions, Camp Shawnigan would not exist and we are eternally grateful for their ongoing commitment, vision and support,” says CEO Lisa Beck.

**“The new dock will enable children with disabilities to have fun and experience adventure in an inclusive and safe environment.”**

**—Lisa Beck, CEO Easter Seals BC/Yukon**

Funding for the dock was provided by generous grants from the Government of Canada through the Enabling Accessibility Fund and the Colonel Harland Sanders Charitable Foundation. A generous donation was also provided on the day by the 100 Men Who Care Cowichan Valley group.

The new dock will allow safe transfer of children to kayaks or boats using lift/hoists. It will have an open-deck area for fishing and gathering, and a special set of stairs that submerge into the water for ease of

access. The dock is partially covered by a sheltering roof, providing shade in the summer. And it will have solar-powered lighting along the dock edges and the roof to provide visual guidance when using it at night or for crafts approaching the dock after dark.

“The new dock will enable children with disabilities to have fun and experience adventure in an inclusive and safe environment—providing the excitement of a swim or a boat ride with a dignified and easy beach entry into the lake,” says Beck.

Camp Shawnigan was never purpose-built to accommodate persons with disabilities, and it was never built with the larger community in mind. In addition to the campers, this project will extend services beyond July and August to meet several of the unmet needs of the Shawnigan Lake and the greater Cowichan Valley. The space will be able to welcome weddings, family reunions and social gatherings, as well as local community events... with the significant benefit of being highly accessible to support family members of all ages and abilities.

Phase One of the project will continue this fall. The project will commence in the Summer of 2027 in time for the 50th anniversary of Camp Shawnigan.

**For more information on the project, visit [campshawnigan.ca](http://campshawnigan.ca) or connect with local staff directly at [info@campshawnigan.ca](mailto:info@campshawnigan.ca)**



# (Wild)fires and Watershed Health

**Marcy Fenske**  
*Shawnigan Basin Society*

Climate change impacts are causing heat, prolonged dry periods, drought and wildfires every summer. Our region is currently at the EXTREME fire danger rating and campfires are banned. When water is most needed there is the least of it for us, ecosystems and the creatures we share space with.

This article is based on a recent Raincoast Conservation Foundation webinar “When Fire Meets Water” and summarizes some key points: the dynamics of fire and watershed health, the necessity and prudence of emergency preparation (FireSmart BC) and how watersheds can increase resiliency to fire.

Who would think that fire is part of the solution? Experts do. And Indigenous people have long known and used

prescribed burns to clear debris and regenerate growth. Many ecosystems are, in fact, dependent on fire and it’s been part of hydrological cycles for millions of years. Studies show greater biodiversity 10-15 years after a fire compared to before. Prolonged fire suppression has actually contributed to the risks we face today. And (wild) is in parentheses as an average of 40% of fires we’ve experienced in BC in the last 10 years have been human caused.

Large scale, intense fires have varying impacts on watersheds and water quality and often results in the necessity for remediation of drinking water sources. Smoke, ash, debris, post-fire bare land vulnerabilities to landslides, watercourse changes and flushing of contaminants can result in mass algae blooms and unusable water. Scorched, bare land is no

longer able to absorb and retain water and a waxy impermeable coating remains post-fire until transition of that surface occurs. Regenerating vegetation and wildlife play important roles in recovery.

Residents are rarely able to return to homes after an intense fire and damage to infrastructure takes time to repair. Residents in Jasper, AB are still having difficulties attaining building permits with soil contamination contributing to the problem. Embers in large fires can travel up to 2 km and fire can jump large bodies of water. It’s imperative for residents to participate in the FireSmart BC program and do what you can to manage your property and be prepared for evacuation in the event that a fire occurs. Clearing vegetation and locating flammable materials to a minimum of 10m from your home



are examples of proactive measures.

Restoration and forest maturity are key to resiliency. Restoring forests to their natural canopy and water retention in the watershed is vital. Much of the Shawnigan Creek watershed’s forests average 40-60 years, have high tree density and lack diversity. Manual thinning and natural recovery of biodiversity takes time. Mature/old growth forests are naturally fire resilient.

It will take the collaboration of numerous stakeholders to realize needed changes in our watershed and the Shawnigan Basin Society is actively working on this with a goal of protecting 30% of the watershed by 2030 (currently 5% is protected). The Shawnigan Lake community has already shown its ability to come together with tremendous strength and focus and we appreciate your support.

## archive from August 2011... any changes?

### It’s not just the Malahat . . . !

**Al Brunet**  
*Shawnigan Focus*

While much is made of the speeding cars and ensuing accidents on the Malahat, many people feel that we have just as big a problem here in Shawnigan. They feel that the low numbers of accidents are only indicative of the fact that our population is smaller. The narrow, meandering roads in our area give rise to many reported “close encounters”

It is not unusual to see vehicles drive over the center line, cut tight curves, wander over into the shoulders

(the only place where pedestrians can walk) or not bother to stop at intersections.

In one 15 minute period on a Thursday morning “The Focus” set up at the main corner in the village to record the traffic. The statistics speak for themselves. Not counting the “dead-slow rolling stop” that most of us do, we counted 36 out of 105 cars that did not stop at the stop sign. Most of the cars braked slightly but could not be in any way construed as a stop.

Of the 36 that did not come to a full and complete stop, four motorists did not even bother to slow down. Three cars pulling out of the service station after their gasoline purchase continued to drive through without stopping. Many cars turning left only made a half-hearted attempt at a stop and, the best one of all, was a service pick-up truck full of traffic cones and stanchions that not only did not stop at the sign, but continued around the corner, turned in the Subway parking lot, went back to the intersection one more time and drove through it again without stopping.

That was two blatant infractions in less than 30 seconds. Add to that, delivery truck drivers who park on the street instead of the parking lot and proceed to block an entire traffic lane . . . almost every morning . . . forcing 2 way traffic to use a single lane and the ever present people who insist on parking under “no parking” signs.

On a nice weekend, the nightmare of vehicles and boat trailers that line the roadside on Heald Rd. makes for very difficult and dangerous situations. So it is not just the Malahat that needs increased police attention. Some people feel the local Shawnigan Lake roads are more scary than the highway

. . . and then there are the speedboats . . . but that’s for another article . . .

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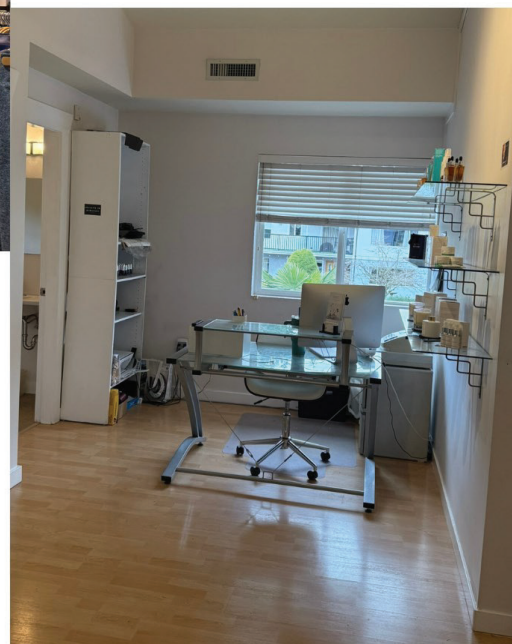
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## Shawnigan Lake Fire Department

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*Mission Statement: To provide fire suppression, medical aid and rescue services to the community. To protect life, property and environment through prevention, public education and emergency response.*

### July 2025 Report

Department Members Attended 41 Incidents in July

- Wednesday, July 2 - 1st Responder off Gregory Rd
- Wednesday, July 2 – Alarms Activated on Shawnigan-Mill Bay Rd
- Thursday, July 3 - 1st Responder off Shawnigan Lake Rd
- Thursday, July 3 – Investigation on Courtney Way
- Thursday, July 3 - 1st Responder off Jersey Rd
- Friday, July 4 – Structure Fire on Deloume Rd
- Friday, July 4 - Burning Complaint on Deloume Rd
- Friday, July 4 – MVI on Cameron-Taggart Rd
- Saturday, July 5 - 1st Responder off Gregory Rd
- Sunday, July 6 - 1st Responder off W Shawnigan Lake Rd
- Sunday, July 6 - 1st Responder off Renfrew Rd
- Monday, July 7 - 1st Responder off Shawnigan-Mill Bay Rd
- Monday, July 7 – Burning Complaint on Deloume Rd
- Monday, July 7 – MVI on Shawnigan Lake Rd
- Tuesday, July 8 - 1st Responder off Shawnigan Lake Rd
- Wednesday, July 9 - 1st Responder off Shawnigan-Mill Bay Rd
- Wednesday, July 9 – Assistance on Northgate Rd
- Thursday, July 10 – MVI on Shawnigan Lake Rd
- Thursday, July 10 – MVI on Renfrew Rd
- Friday, July 11 - 1st Responder off Shawnigan Lake Rd
- Friday, July 11 - 1st Responder off Renfrew Rd
- Saturday, July 12 - 1st Responder off Shawnigan-Mill Bay Rd
- Saturday, July 12 - 1st Responder off Gregory Rd
- Saturday, July 12 – Burning Complaint on Long Island
- Saturday, July 12 - 1st Responder off Treit Rd
- Sunday, July 13 - 1st Responder off Shawnigan-Mill Bay Rd
- Thursday, July 17 – Assistance on Shawnigan-Mill Bay Rd
- Thursday, July 17 – Wildland Fire on McKean Rd
- Thursday, July 17 – Assistance on Sallachie Rd
- Friday, July 18 - 1st Responder off Shawnigan Lake Rd
- Saturday, July 19- Burning Complaint on McKean Rd
- Wednesday, July 23 – Assistance on Shawnigan-Mill Bay Rd
- Wednesday, July 23 – MVI on Renfrew Rd
- Friday, Jul 25 - 1st Responder off Renfrew Rd
- Saturday, Jul 26 - 1st Responder off Silvermine Rd
- Monday, Jul 28 – Burning Complaint on Heald Rd
- Tuesday, Jul 29 - 1st Responder off Renfrew Rd
- Tuesday, Jul 29 – Structure Fire on Shawnigan Lake Rd
- Tuesday, Jul 29 – Burning Complaint on Shawnigan Lake Rd
- Tuesday, Jul 29 - 1st Responder off Shawnigan Lake Rd
- Wednesday, Jul 30 – Assistance at Shawnigan Wharf Park

## Bruce Hutchison

Robert Amos  
Artist & Author

For several generations, Bruce Hutchison was one of Canada’s beloved newspapermen and “the dean of Canadian political commentators”. When he found time to leave his Victoria home for some rest and relaxation, he made his way to Shawnigan Lake where he transformed a wilderness shack into a family cabin full of memories. In 1988 - at the age of 87 years - Hutchison published *A Life in the Country*, a bittersweet look at the joys and tribulations of “the country life that urban dwellers envy and fortunately escape.” This is the first of a series of excerpts from this book.

Robert Amos

... Too late, I realized that I should have razed the cabin and started building afresh. It took me three summers to gut its insides, reline them with yellow cedar, add a kitchen and a bathroom, fashion bunks, cupboards and bookcases and hew a mantel shelf out of a fir log

Even then, the absurd project was not finished. For the use of my newly married son and his wife, I undertook to build a large sundeck if he would manhandle the necessary beams and floor planks over a rough trail a quarter of a mile long. Roping them to our wheelbarrow, he somehow brought them in. By the summer’s end, the deck, resting on solid concrete foundations, seemed to justify our efforts, and it was to serve two more generations of the tribe.

Much other work had been done already - three wharfs, a woodshed, a workshop, a

boathouse high above the lake with a runway of squared logs and a cradle on wheels for launching the boats, a dressing hut for swimmers and more than a hundred pieces of furniture, not elegant but strong and durable.

One of the earliest and the hardest jobs of all was a guest hut. I dragged its log uprights, beams and rafters from the woods and lifted them by ropes and pulleys because, in those days, I had no one to help me. For the walls, I bought an abandoned garage at a cost of four dollars, and carried its sound boards half a mile from the main road.

Long before our original cabin had been rebuilt, we devised a primitive apparatus to cool perishable foodstuffs. The oil drum on stilts, filled with water that we pumped by hand from the lake, supplied a flat metal tank over a porch cupboard swathed in burlap. As the cloth sucked moisture from the tank, it was slightly chilled by evaporation. Our rudimentary refrigerator wasn’t much good, but it kept meat from spoiling and butter from liquefying for a couple of days if we constantly replenished the oil drum.

Of necessity I worked with stone, too. Retaining walls were easy to build once I learned to mix cement and sand in the right proportions. But to find enough smooth rocks for a patio about thirty feet square, bring them out of the woods in the wheelbarrow and lay them with a surface approximately level was a task for two summers.

On bruised knees, my hands raw from sharp boulders, I wistfully imagined that, long



Summer, a linocut by Marion Lea Jamieson for *A Life in the Country*

after most human remains had disappeared, some alien archaeologists might penetrate a new jungle, stumble on my stonework and puzzle over it. Here, one of them would say, barbarian creatures probably sacrificed young virgins to bloodthirsty gods, or glaciers and earthquakes had accidentally deposited the stones in a rough pattern. No, no, a second investigator argues, sentient beings, not quite human but superior to most animals, lived here before civilized men poisoned the planet and almost destroyed their species.

If such a future argument was improbable, my walls and patio (unlike newspaper columns that perished in a single day) would last for several generations. It is surprising what a man can do over six decades; surprising also that he takes more enjoyment in a spare-time hobby than in his trade. Most surprising of all is the collapse of his energies after middle age and, with them, his vainglory.

from Bruce Hutchison *A Life in the Country* (1988). Douglas and McIntyre. Illustration from this edition by Marion Dahl.

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- **Shawnigan Lake Museum**  
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- **Shawnigan Residents Association (SRA)**  
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- **Shawnigan Lake Community Association (SLCA)**  
Contact: [bburr@shaw.ca](mailto:bburr@shaw.ca)
- **Shawnigan Basin Society**  
#102-1760 Shawnigan Mill Bay Road. Contact: [info@shawniganbasinsociety.org](mailto:info@shawniganbasinsociety.org)
- **Young Seniors Action Group (YSAGS)**  
Contact: [ysagssl@gmail.com](mailto:ysagssl@gmail.com) (web): [blog.ysag.ca](http://blog.ysag.ca)
- **South Cowichan Community Policing (SCCP)**  
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- **Royal Canadian Legion Malahat District Branch 134**  
Events: (web) [malahatlegion.ca/upcoming-legion-events](http://malahatlegion.ca/upcoming-legion-events)  
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250-643-4621
- **Cowichan South Arts Guild (CSAG)**  
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- **Shawnigan Quilters** - Wed. 9-2 at Lion's Hall (former Sylvania School)
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