



The Glories of Fall in our own Backyard

A Hike report from October 19, 2016.

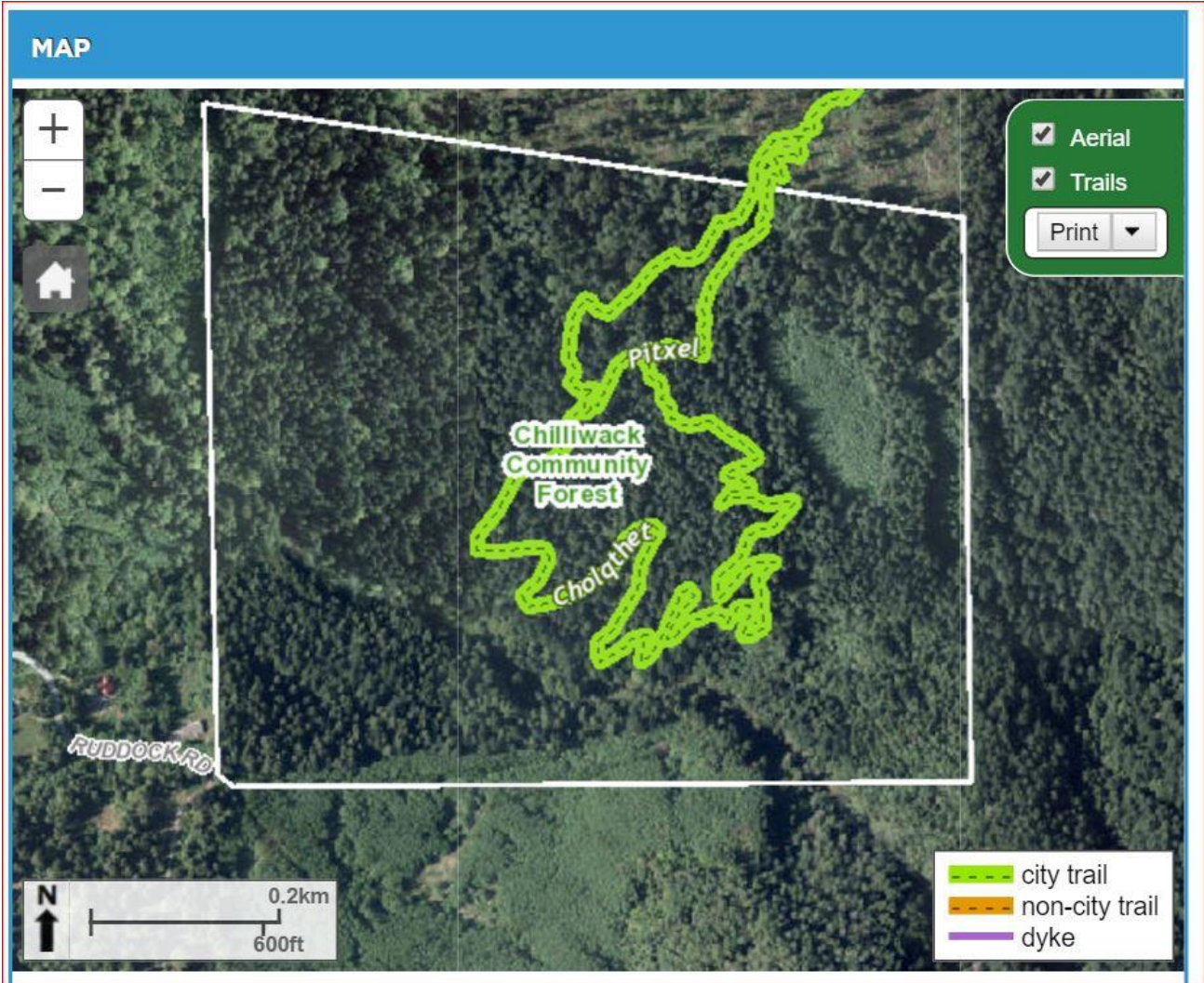
Story and Pictures by Art Lengkeek

So, what happened Art, what made you change your mind about not writing another trip report? We thought that you would not write another one this season?

I could just imagine the questions from my readers on the mailing list and here is my answer:

When I had finished writing, and composing my *last report of the season* on my latest Skagit Bluff Trail Hike, I thought that *was it for leaf peeping* this season, as the weather had turned very wet again plus I did not expect to be able to experience anything similar close to home. Well, I was wrong on both counts, on Tuesday the weather forecast changed and it showed sun and clouds the next day but no rain. Even though I knew from previous observations that you can't equal the red shades in the vine maple's fall colours in Chilliwack, it should still be nice.

Our Community Forest that was officially opened by Mayor and Council in the spring of 2016, did have quite a number of vine maples so it was worth checking out. Besides that fact, many Community volunteers from the Chilliwack Parks Society and the Fraser Valley Mountain Bikers Association had been busy building more trails, so why not check how the work had progressed during the summer and invite some hiking friends to join me if interested. As it was, four friends were able to join me in the morning because of a late cancellation by our hiking club.



In the context of this report it is not possible to relate the complete story of the *Chilliwack Community Forest* but suffice it to say that it is located in the far south eastern corner of Chilliwack that until quite recently was largely unknown to the majority of the population. Even today, I don't know of a printed street map being available in the bookstores that show the existing network of roads here. I would advise interested people to visit the City of Chilliwack's website at www.chilliwack.com and sign

COMMUNITY FOREST TRAILS

PARK OPERATIONS

TRAIL RATING

- More Difficult
- Easy

YOU ARE HERE

- Trail Direction
- Access Road
- Campour (20m Interval)
- Future Trail Development
- Chilliwack Community Forest

Cholqhet (choik-THET)
Dropping in like a bird falling out of the nest for the first time.
Length = 2 km
Elevation Gain = 150 m

Pitxel (PEETHyul)
Solomon
Length = 1.5 km
Elevation Gain = 75 m

INFORMATION

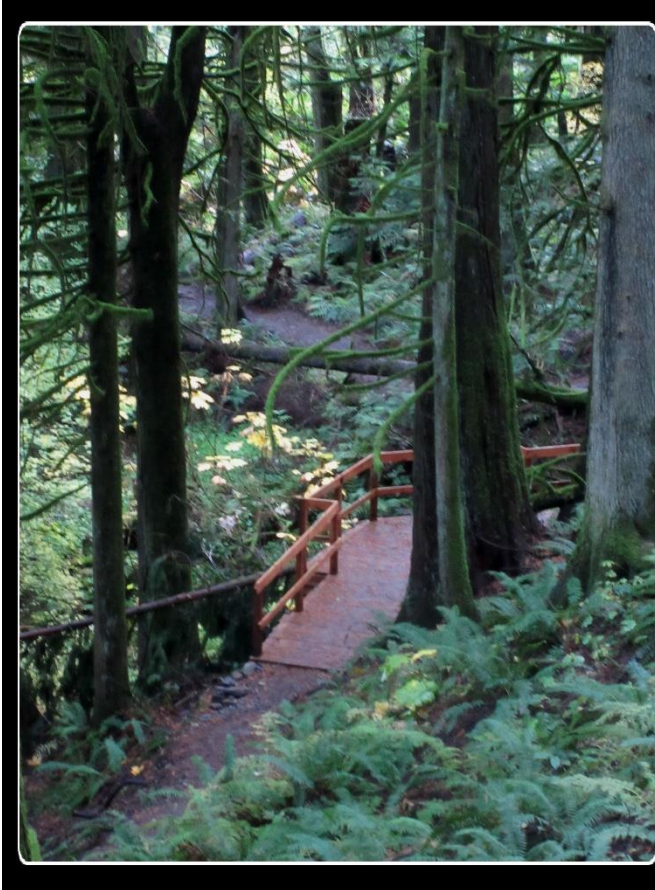
As in all wooded areas there are a few cautions:

- When windy branches may fall without warning.
- Some trails are one-way only follow signage.
- Share the trail watch for other trail users.
- Trails may be slippery when wet, frosty or snow covered.
- Stay on trails to avoid damaging plants.
- No garbage facilities if you pick it in - pick it out.
- Wildlife may be encountered on many trails; make noise when you are in bear country.
- Report any damage or hazards to the number below.

CONTACT US For information contact Chilliwack Park Operations at (604) 793-2810 or by e-mail at operations@chilliwack.com. For information on other parks, visit the Chilliwack web site: www.chilliwack.com. The data was compiled from various sources by the City of Chilliwack. The accuracy of the map is not guaranteed.

into the on-line map section to find proper directions. More information is available at <chilliwackparksociety.ca>

So, it was that on a bright but cool Wednesday morning we, four girls and a guy set out to



explore the trails and discover the improvements that had been made to the trail system plus the latest autumn colours if they were available. We had badly estimated both as it was.

The trail surfaces were in excellent condition and more explanatory signs had been placed in strategic locations. Some of us had not seen the excellent bridge and



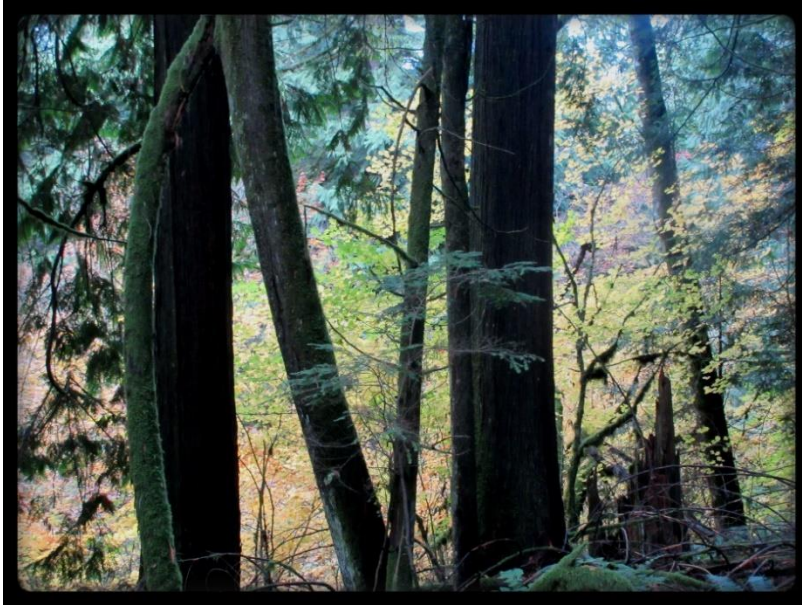
lookout section as yet that had been built



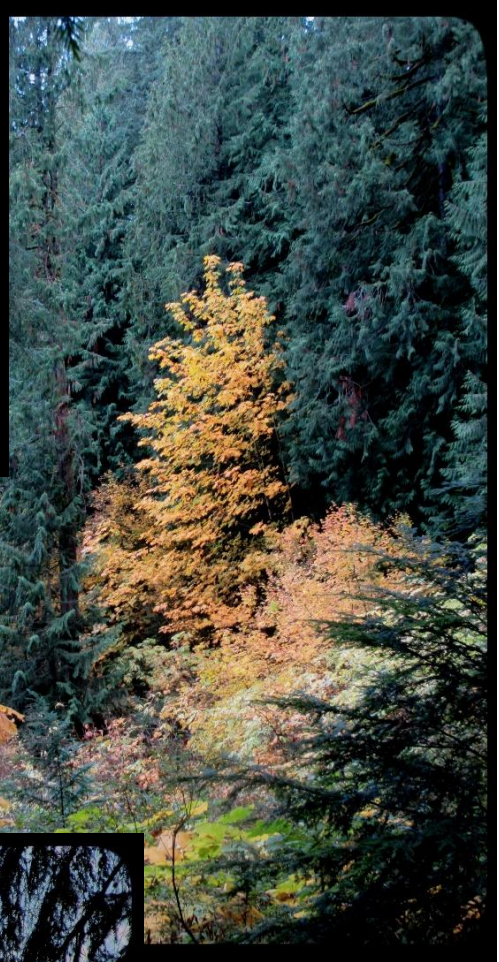
and installed by students in the woodworking class at nearby Unity Christian school. We were in awe of the quality of the workmanship shown by girls, boys and teachers.

Here are two pictures of our little group of five hikers as we arrived at

our turn-off to the Gloria Lookout trail and it was here where the first colourful part of the trail was encountered.



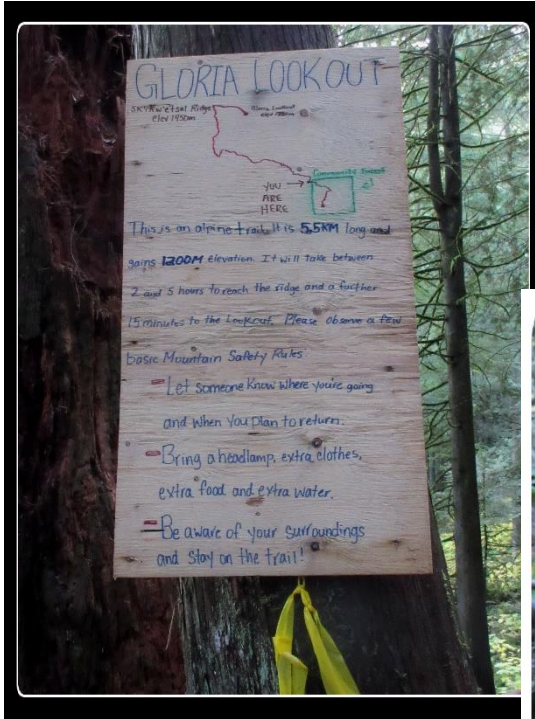
I had first hiked the first part of Gloria Trail on May 11, 2016 and climbed as high as I could that



day. I had not expected to see the entire trail to Gloria lookout completed before the end of the year but the amount of work that has been done exceeds all my fondest expectations. The trail climbs up more steeply in this part of the Community Forest and allows peeks through the tree cover that could be improved a great deal if the



city would allow the removal of the odd tree or even the trimming of a few of the obstructing branches. In the picture below I could not zoom into the multi-coloured slopes on the mountains across the Fraser River. I believe that we



another sign, most likely put up by the Chilliwack Parks Society, explaining that the trail is now

are looking at Bear Mountain there but cannot be sure. A nice bench has been placed at one of the best view points and it is worth the time to first take a little breather before continuing past this point. After another ten minutes or so we reached a tree with a sign on it, announcing that we were now leaving City property and entering provincial land. We soon saw



getting steeper, gains a total of 1200 meters (3927 ft.) in elevation and gets more difficult. The sign explains that the trail to Gloria Lookout is 5½ kilometers (3.42 miles) in length one way. I had personally hiked and gained about 600 meters or one half of this elevation change on the Gloria trail before and did not have any plans to try



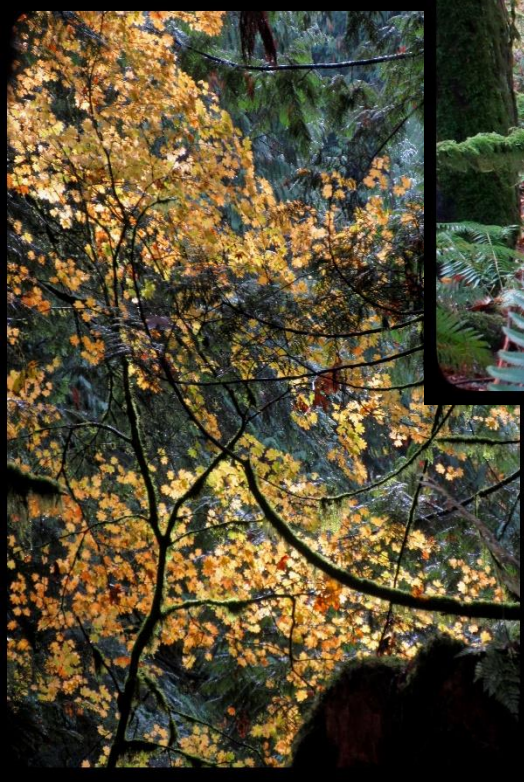
and do the rest of this hike today. This trail is best left for summer when the days are much longer as it is rated extremely difficult for hikers and a black diamond trail for mountain bikers. We decided to continue further up the mountain and check out the Broken Tree loop.





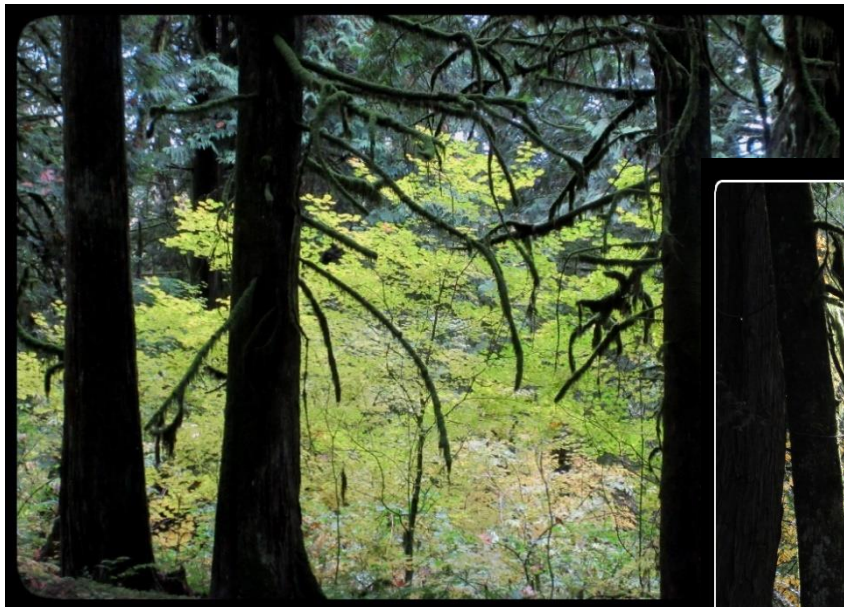
We took the easy but longer one first and the steeper section on the way down again. You've got to love those homemade signs. Were they also made by the woodworking class at Unity Christian School? Great job kids!

We consulted for a few moments to decide which way to go, the shorter way back to the parking lot or the

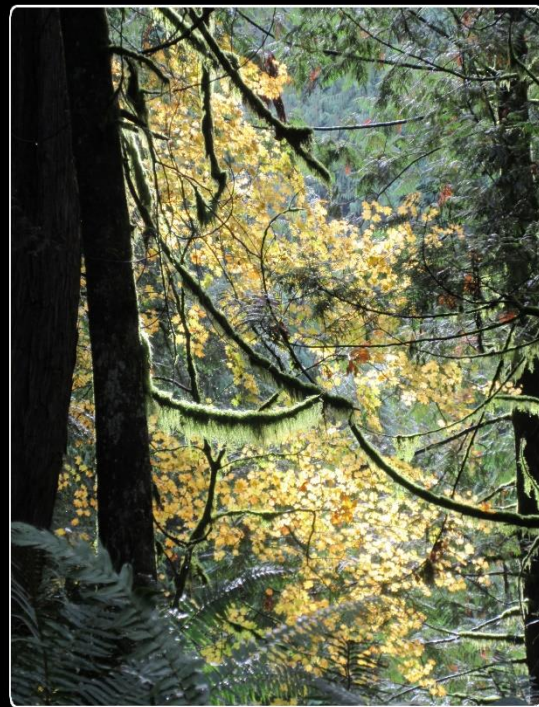


far more scenic Canyon Loop. The majority decided it was too early to return and I was happy with that decision because I had only hiked Canyon Loop as far as the big pile of blown down trees before. The trail is now complete and I got my wish to see the new part also.

In the picture above you can actually see the creek that could be heard for some time already. It runs from left top to right bottom. When we arrived at the former end of Canyon Trail the mess had been cleaned



up and the large freshly cut blocks of wood stood beside the trail, all ready to serve as chairs and tables for us to eat



some snacks and take a rest. We agreed that was an excellent plan and we did just that.

We continued along the canyon rim for a while until the trail turned down to the right to bring us back to our starting point. When I was walking along, my eyes fell on the weirdest, what appeared to be Alder Bracket that I had ever seen.

It was large and strong enough to support my daypack. It also had some strange multi-coloured bumpy smaller humps growing on top of



it, that appeared to be firmly attached to the flat part. Don't get confused by the reddish parts, they are small parts of cedar boughs that had fallen on it from above. Can anyone help me out on this one?

The final part of the Canyon Loop Trail is very noteworthy. All those moss-draped trees and branches are so fascinating that they make it look like a fairy wonderland in places. There are

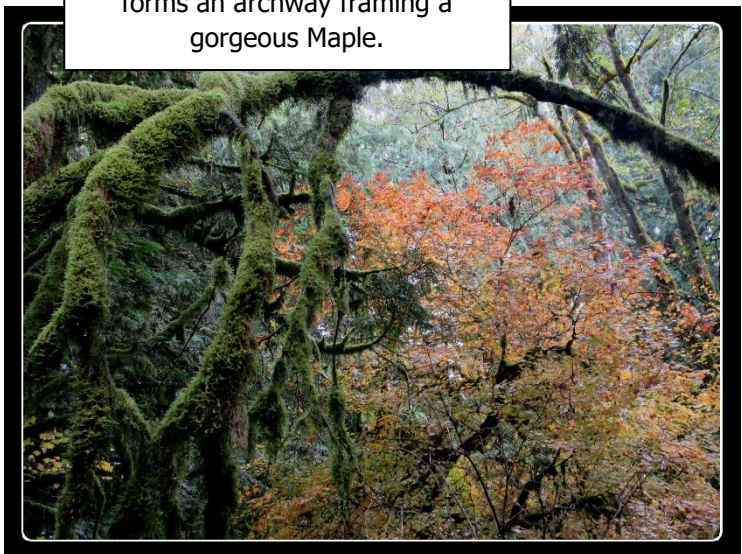


moss draped living branches on a Vine Maple that look twice as thick because there is thick green moss growing all around it, yet it does not appear to affect the health of the living Tree. Look at this fine specimen below on this page. And what about this dead tree that is totally coated with living

mosses? It appears at first sight like an out of place Monkey Puzzle tree.



A giant moss-covered dead snag forms an archway framing a gorgeous Maple.





With this we had completed our forest hike and once again the timing appeared to be perfect. There was not one of us who was not on a high with the splendour in our own backyard! At certain times, we might get tired of fall and winter rains but let's face it, look how nice all that



moss looks on the branches of the Old Vine Maple. The branches are now three to four times their natural thickness because of their dark green coats of moss.

I must say again that I was very impressed with the amount of volunteer work that was done since my last visit to the park. It is now possible to run, yes I am serious, to run all the way up to the ridge at Gloria Lookout. That does not mean that it is possible for me to do that but when we were hiking down

Gloria as it is affectionately called, we met what must be a professional trail runner, breezing past and saying in answer to my question, are you heading for Gloria? *No going for Elk*

(Mountain). I am looking forward to completing the Gloria Lookout Hike next summer if I can still handle it. For the next few months I hope to be happily hiking the *Hills of Home*, like the Mount Thom Trail, the Eastern Hillside, Vedder and Promontory. I have always liked reading books and poetry. Sixty-five years ago, when I was a young immigrant from Europe, one of the first things I did with my hard-earned money was spending an hour and a half's wages on a little book of poetry by the, at that time well known poet *Edna Jacques*,

The Hills of Home.

The first stanza read like this:

*The hills of home are little hills, But oh I love them so;
The purple tinted sweep of them Against the evening's glow,
The way a tall tree bows its head Like an old man when prayers are said.*

and the last stanza had only two lines:

Finding in them a sweet release, A zone of comfort, joy and peace.

Rests me yet, to address a few lines to the Mayor and Council of the City of Chilliwack, their hard-working city

officials and employees, the Government of our Province, folks at the Chilliwack Parks Association, the Mountain Bikers Association and their many community volunteers, not to forget young and old at Unity Christian School for making all this possible. Coming together and working together for the good of our entire community. It has been only five months since the official opening of



this community park on a rainy Saturday, May 28, 2016 and look at all the work that has been done since. Many community volunteers were there in spite of the rain to celebrate with Mayor Sharon Gaetz and several Councillors present. I thought that we have just enough space left for another picture as a reminder of the festive occasion and the lovely pork roast enjoyed by all.

***Go out I beg of you And taste the beauty of the wild.
Behold the miracle of the earth With all the wonder of a child.
Edna Jacques, (1891-1978)***