

# A SENSE OF HISTORY

“...the dying of a generation is the vanishing of what was known.”  
~ Dr Barry Leach, writer, conservationist

*Tracing Our Past ~ A Heritage Guide to Boundary Bay* is the story of a landscape and the people who transformed it. It is an exploration of local history from an ecological perspective: how human activities have shaped past and present landscapes, and how we are influencing our future on this coast. I look at the natural resources used by people for thousands of years and at the ecosystem changes that have occurred. This guide is intended to be a companion to my earlier book, *A Nature Guide to Boundary Bay*, which celebrated the wealth of wildlife to be found in and around Boundary Bay, from whales and eagles to sandpipers and salmon. In that volume, we saw how this exceptional area is a migration stopover and wintering area for millions of birds, as well as being rich in many other forms of life, including world-renowned Fraser River salmon.

In choosing topics for this current book, I could only skim the surface of the subject; the history of Boundary Bay is an ancient one. Many farming families are justly proud of having lived here for five generations, yet Indigenous coastal people have been here for 500 generations! Tantalising clues to their lives are found in archaeological remains, information which is supplemented by a rich oral history. European exploration came late and opened the door to an eclectic mix of settlers: their stories provide us with a glimpse of the landscape of the time. For years, agriculture and fishing were mainstays of local communities, reaping the harvest of land, river and sea. The twentieth century saw rapid settlement and land conversion, resulting in sweeping changes to the environment. In recent decades, conservation has come to the fore, as concern for ecological sustainability increasingly interests us.

I hope to provide here an enjoyable guide to this natural heritage. Signs of past activities create varied and interesting heritage destinations, such as Coast Salish traditional sites, old canneries, period houses, and historic trails. *Tracing Our Past ~ A Heritage Guide to Boundary Bay* covers the whole watershed of Boundary Bay, including both sides of the international border from Delta, Surrey, White Rock, Langley and Richmond, in British Columbia, to Point Roberts, Blaine and Birch Bay in Washington State.