

World Rivers Day

Are you feeling 'awareness day' overload? Did you remember that it is Arthritis Month, Big Brothers Big Sisters Month, Breakfast for Learning Month, Muscular Dystrophy Month, and Ovarian Cancer Month? That's in Canada. Around the world it is Childhood Cancer Awareness Month and Thyroid Cancer Awareness Month. Oh and this week is National Forest Week and.....so many important things to care about and there is one more. September 26th is World Rivers Day - one of my favourites.

The special thing about the United Nation's World Rivers Day is that it is rooted in BC. It began in September 1980 when BCIT's Mark Angelo and 40 others spent the day cleaning up the Thompson River. It was so much fun they continued their efforts the next year. The idea caught on and spread. By 1993 we had an official BC Rivers day and in 2005 the UN took international.

1993 was also an important year for BC's Rivers because the Minister of Environment at the time established a blue ribbon committee including among others Mark Angelo and the Honourable David Anderson (now a member of the Cowichan Watershed Board) to investigate the benefits of BC joining the Canadian Heritage River System. (All provinces except BC and Alberta were already members.) The panel's report, aptly named *What's in it for the River*, noted that BC's rivers were undervalued. As a result the province designated the Adams, Babine, Blackwater, **Cowichan**, Fraser, Skagit and Stikine as BC's inaugural heritage rivers. Then in 2005 the Cowichan was designated as a Canadian Heritage River joining the Fraser and Kickinghorse as BC rivers with national heritage status.

As a heritage river it was envisioned that the Cowichan would be "A model of watershed cooperation among a wide variety of stakeholders."and we are holding fast to that vision. Today the Cowichan watershed is considered to be at the leading edge of watershed management because of the cooperative relationships and commitment to stewardship among business, governments, conservation group and individual citizens. The Cowichan Watershed Board the Cowichan Lake and River Stewardship Committee, the Cowichan Land Trust, the Quamichan Lake Stewards and the Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society are just a handful of the many positive forces working for a healthy, prosperous watershed.

Our watershed is large and there is much to care for. This month the focus is on river clean up. Gerald Thom recently helped lead a successful clean up day from the lake down to Skutz Falls. **This Sunday, on World Rivers Day, Don Barrie (tourismcowichan@shaw.ca) is leading a clean up between Skutz Falls and Marie Canyon. Shore support workers are needed. Interested volunteers should meet at Riverbottom Road and Mayo at 10 am. Please bring gloves and good foot wear. The clean up will be followed by a barbeque and prizes at the Warm Rapids Inn.**

If you can't make it to the clean up please take a few minutes to think about our rivers and streams and wetlands and the lives, including ours that they support. Every day should be Rivers Day here in the Valley.