

# Camosun monitors health of Colwood's Coburg peninsula

Sam Van Schie  
News staff

An ecology class at Camosun College is helping track the re-growth of native plants at Esquimalt Lagoon.

The project began in 2007 when the Esquimalt Lagoon Stewardship Initiative planted grasses and flowers on the Coburg peninsula beach to restore dune habitat on the ocean side of the lagoon.

"We didn't know if the plants would even survive. There's a lot of human disturbance from people using the beach," said ecology instructor Dave Blundon.

Each semester his students inventory everything growing in areas where the plantings took place and compare that to unaltered control areas. Research plots are intentionally unmarked, so they're just as likely to have people trample them as anywhere on the beach.

"So far what we're finding is native species are increasing, both in areas where they were planted and in control plots," Blundon said, explaining that seeds from the native species drift into the control areas.

A healthy dune ecosystem can help protect the lagoon against erosion, which has been eating away at beach since the Royal Bay gravel mine closed and cut off the constant supply of sediment that helped create the peninsula.



Sam Van Schie/News staff

**Camosun students Josh McInnes and Maria Samuels record gum weed growth at the Esquimalt Lagoon, a species planted to slow erosion of the Coburg peninsula.**

*"A healthy dune will slow (erosion) down, but it won't stop it."*

**—Dave Blundon  
Ecology instructor**

Roots of planted species — including dune grass, gum weed, bur weed and beach pea — helps hold the sand in place. This is important when big storms hit.

"With rising sea levels and global warming, storms are becoming more intense," Blundon said. "The plants' root systems should hold the sand and keep it from eroding away."

Blundon hopes the findings from his class's study will prompt new funding to plant more native species in the dunes.

The City of Colwood has looked into engineering options to prevent erosion of the beach, including replenishing the beach with sand every five to 10 years, for a cost of \$2 million.

Blundon said if nothing is done to prevent erosion of the peninsula, it will turn into barrier islands over time, making travel on it impossible. The dune is only part of the solution.

"It's the natural cycle," he said. "A healthy dune will slow (erosion) down, but it won't stop it."

# New candidates bring fresh competition to Colwood council

Sam Van Schie  
News staff

Three more Colwood council hopefuls have announced their intention to run in the November municipal election.

Current Coun. and Solar Colwood champion Judith Cullington will seek a second term.

A small business owner and 17-year resident of Colwood, Cullington spent the past three years as chair of the transportation and public infrastructure committee and sat on several other municipal and Capital Regional District committees.

She spearheaded the Solar Colwood initiative, securing government grants to reduce the cost to residents retrofitting their homes with solar hot water and other energy-saving devices.

"I would like the opportunity to carry on the work that I have started," Cullington said. "I want to continue to build strong and productive relationships with community partners, to build a strong local economy, and to work towards a more sustainable community."

The two other candidates stepping forward are new to the ballot but have both served as volunteer members of council committees.

Robert Martin, a member of Colwood's sewage oversight committee, wants to increase his role at the council table. The 13-year resident is concerned about municipal tax increases and the need for new city infrastructure.

"Council in 2012 will need vision and strong leadership to help pilot our way through some turbulent times," Martin said.

Shari Lukens, a member of Colwood's planning and land use committee and the mayor's task force for energy and economic growth, will have her name on the ballot.

A national figure skating coach, Lukens says she'll advocate for a review of core municipal services and look for ways to improve civic operations. She also wants to attract new business and development to the city.

"I'm prepared to listen, to research and to make decisions that will enable Colwood to be a sustainable and exciting place for families to live, and a destination waterfront community where businesses prosper," she said.

These candidates and others will have a chance to voice their issues at an all-candidate meeting Wednesday, Nov. 2 at the Church of the Advent, 510 Mount View Ave.

news@goldstreamgazette.com

# Thrifty co-founder Alex Campbell passes away

He was a man who in his retirement gave more of himself and his accumulated wealth than most people expected.

Alex Campbell Sr., co-founder of Thrifty Foods, community booster and philanthropist, passed away early Tuesday morning at age

70, after a lengthy illness.

Victoria-born Campbell worked to help various charities on the Island after retiring from the grocery business, both in a leadership role and as a face for fund-raising efforts.

Campbell contributed more than \$2 million in

personal and corporate donations to the Victoria Hospitals Foundation, and gave more in terms of his time.

Campbell received numerous awards in the later stages of his career, including the Order of British Columbia in 1999 and a 2011 Leadership Victoria award.

He co-founded Thrifty Foods in 1977 with Ernie Skinner and helped guide the company's growth on Vancouver Island and the Mainland, with 20 stores.

With Campbell as CEO, was named one of Canada's top 50 best-managed companies four years running.



**Alex Campbell Sr.**