

AN INVITATION TO
PERSONAL REFLECTION
& WELL-BEING



**PUNTLIDGE
RIVER
TRANSITION
WALK**





Comox Valley
Hospice Society

Introduction

The **Puntledge River Transition Walk** is part of the **Comox Valley Hospice Society Nature Walks Program** (CVHS). It is a self-care program designed to connect people who are journeying through loss, illness, or caregiver fatigue, with the healing powers and beauty of nature. Using the guidebook provided, you can take part in a self-led nature walk at your own pace, using the themed questions provided for personal reflection, and allow nature to be a therapeutic environment in which wellness can occur. By focusing on the present moment and experiencing the sights and sounds of nature, many find that a sense of wellbeing and calm reduces feelings of sadness, hopelessness, fear, anxiety and loneliness.

Along the guided nature walk will be rest or reflection points that have been chosen as places to pause and reflect related to the theme of **Transition**. These have been marked in your guidebook.

-  = rest/reflection point
-  = topic for reflection, journaling, drawing or some other form of creative expression

Please dress appropriately for the weather and bring along a journal, a pen, some water, and a cell phone (if you have one).

Welcome




















The parking lot is along 1st Avenue and the trail entrance is near the end of Urquhart Ave and near the washrooms building. This is an easy walk, and accessible for most people.

Be Alert to...

High wind events, river levels, dogs off-leash and the potential for wildlife encounters. (See pages 33-34 for more information.)



List of Stopping Points

-  #1 Bridge
-  #2 Bench 1
-  #3 Bench 2
-  #4 Big Tree
-  #5 Rapids
-  #6 The Big Rock
-  #7 Into the Woods
-  #8 Finding Your Tree
-  #9 Finding Roots
-  #10 Fallen Log
-  #11 Crossroads
-  #12 Y Tree
-  #13 Lookout
-  #14 Green Metal Shed
-  #15 Choice Point
-  #16 The Creek
-  #17 The Bridge
-  #18 Up the Hill
-  #19 The Bench



Before You Begin:

Take a moment to check in with yourself. What is your mood like? How are you feeling? What bodily sensations are you noticing? What thoughts are running through your mind? Now take a deep breath and look around at your surroundings, using all your senses.



 **#1 Stop - Bridge**

Walk down the path and stop on the bridge.

 ***Reflective Points**

- Standing on the bridge between two places, reflect on times of transition.
- What resources did you draw on?
- What were the connecting bridges?

#2



#2 Stop - First Bench

Walk down to the bench and take a seat. This is an opportunity to journal your experience from the bridge. Now take in your current vantage point.



*Reflective Points

- Gaze at the moving river and the surrounding trees, what does this movement evoke in you?

My Reflections

"In every walk in with nature, one receives far more than he seeks." - John Muir



#3 Stop - Second Bench

Walk to the second bench that faces the playground.

*Reflective Points

- What do you notice here?
- Notice your inner motivation and sensations.
- How do you know when it's time to move on in your life?
- How will you decide when to head to the next reflection point?



#4 Stop - Big Tree

Walk along the river and stop at the **big fir tree** on the right of the path then wander down to the riverfront. As you approach the water notice how the river winds.

*Reflective Points

- As you contemplate the river winding around the bend and changing direction, what motivates you to make changes?
- Imagine metaphorically what it would be like to be the river, or a rock or stone in the water. How does this play with your imagination and perspective?



#5 Stop - The Rapids

Here you will see the rapids and also some pools and back eddies.

*Reflective Points

- Notice the movement and flow of the river; how does it compare and contrast with how you are feeling today?
- What can it teach you about rhythm and flow in your life?



#6 Stop - The Big Rock

Return to the path, and when you see the **big rock** across the river, continue walking past the pole with the siren on top. On your left, you will see a fallen log at the entrance to a small path into the woods.

My Reflections



#7 Stop - Into the Woods

Leaving the main path, take the narrow path into the woods. Stop at the fallen log on the left.

*Reflective Points

- Notice what the transition into the woods feels like. What feels different here than on the main path?
- You may want to sit here and journal your experience in the woods.



#8 Stop - Finding Your Tree

Trees have much to offer us symbolically. Find a tree that calls you. The roots ground us, the trunk supports us, the branches reach out for new life and sunshine, and the seed creates new life.

*Reflective Points

- How can your tree support you in this time of change?



 **#9 Stop - Finding Roots**

Take the small path off to the left until you see a big fir tree on the right. There is also a large root across the path.

 ***Reflective Points**

- Contemplate the big root and consider how your roots have supported you.
- What are the roots in your life that are nourishing you now?
- Take time to notice the ground around you. What do you see now, that you might normally miss?



 **#10 Stop - Fallen Log**

Return to the small path you were on, stay left at the junction where the path goes around a fallen log. Here is another spot to sit and journal your experience in the woods.

 **Reflective Points**

- Look up into the treetops and then down to the ground. How does having different viewpoints change your perspective?
- As you gaze around these woods, what signs do you notice about the cycle of nature and/or the changing seasons?
- Reflect on the seasons of your own life; what season of life would you say that you are in now?



#11 Stop - Crossroads

When you are ready, continue on the path until you reach a 3-way intersection. At this point you have a choice, you can continue to follow the guided directions, or choose to explore on your own.

*Reflective Points

- Contemplate the intersections in your life; the choices you've made; and what you've learned from them.

My Reflections

*“Look deep into nature and you’ll understand everything better.”
Albert Einstein*



#12

#12 Stop - Y Tree

Turn right at the intersection, you will travel along the path until you come to a T-junction. Turn right again and ahead of you will be a large Y-shape tree; beyond that you will see the river. Take a moment to stop and look at the Y Tree.

*Reflective Points

- What are the "why's" you are currently contemplating in life?

My Reflections

"Our very being, essence, health and happiness depend on Mother Earth."

- David Suzuki



#13 Stop - Look Out

As you pass by the Y tree and cross the main path, you are out of the woods and back to the river. If you are able, and the river isn't too high, consider making your way to the riverbed.

*Reflective Points

- Take a moment to look at the path you have taken.
- What do you feel you've left behind and what, perhaps, still lies ahead?
- Notice the edges where land and water meet; how do you meet and blend with the changing landscapes in your life?



#14 Stop - Green Metal Shed

As you rejoin the main path, continue along to your right, until you see a green metal shed, this marks the last view of the river.

*Reflective Points

- How does this view affect you?
- Think about times you have come in and out of the main path of life:
- What motivates you to leave or rejoin others in your life?
- When do you choose connection and when do you choose to be alone?



#15

#15 Stop - Choice Points

A little further along the main path, you will see a large **maple tree** that has lost its top. The path on the right goes uphill to a residential area on Willemar Avenue; to the left the path goes back into the woods, where there is a picnic table. Straight ahead is the second bridge.



*Reflective Points

- Here is another opportunity to contemplate choices and how you make them.
- Which path calls you today?

My Reflections



#16

#16 Stop - The Creek

Just before you arrive at the bridge, you will see that the creek flows under the path you are on.



*Reflective Points

- Stand facing the downward flow and allow your mind to empty. Let your concerns, troubles, and expectations be carried down the creek. Leave whatever you need to leave behind, before stepping onto the bridge.

#17



 #17 Stop - The Bridge

Stop on the bridge and look down into the creek.



***Reflective Points**

- Be still here. Sense the structure under you. What are the supportive structures, internally or externally, in your life?

My Reflections

"I go to nature to be soothed, healed and have my senses put in order."

- John Burroughs



#18- Up the Hill

When you are ready, take the path uphill staying left, not exiting via the yellow gate. At the top, stop at the fence and enjoy the view of the bridge and forest below.

*Reflective Points

- The journey today is coming to an end. Take a moment to pay attention to your thoughts, feelings, mood and bodily sensations.



#19 Stop - The Bench

Stay along the fence until you come to a bench in the park facing the road. Here is a final place to sit and journal your walk experience.

*Reflective Points

- How do you feel now, compared to when you first started your nature walk?
- What are some of the ways that you can continue to nurture and care for yourself, moving forward?
- Before returning to your day or moving on to the next activity, offer thanks to yourself for taking this time to be present, mindful and caring for your whole being.

The parking lot is about 150 metres down the river beyond the bench.

My Reflections

More Reflections

Beloved, I have not left you
To mourn my passing alone.
Yes, I am soaring freely
From the body that no longer serves me,
but I am with you still
In the gentle breeze that reaches out
To cool the tears on your cheeks.
I am touching you.
In the murmuring of a snow fed brook
As you wander a forest path we knew,
I am telling you of the healing beauty of this earth.
In the flickering of an open fire
I show you my faith
In your strength to express your grief,
Your anger and your loneliness
So that you may share your healing journey with others
In the sweet song of the birds
As the morning sun kisses the treetops,
I am singing you the song of freedom
To grow through your pain and continue on your journey through life
I am with you - in your heart.

- Cori Farstad

My Reflections

*"The earth has it's music for those who will listen."
- George Santayana*

My Reflections

*"The more time you spend with nature, the deeper your understanding
of life will be." - Nitin Namdeo*

My Reflections

“A walk in nature, walks the soul back home.”

– Mary Davis

Volunteer Led Peer Support & Bereavement Services)

Gentle Walks for Grieving Hearts - A weekly group that meets on Thursday mornings 10am-12pm for a 45 minute walk around the Courtenay Airpark with others experiencing loss. Afterward, a time for coffee/tea and light refreshments in the CVHS Family Room at Ocean Front Village. Register online comoxhospice.com or call 250-871-0696 ext 1, or email reception@comoxhospice.com

Bereavement Phone Support - The pain and loneliness following a recent death can be eased with the help of a trained volunteer, who provides compassionate, non-judgmental support through regular phone calls. Call 250-871-0696 ext 1 for more information.

The Mourning Cafe - A weekly group that meets on Tuesday mornings 10am-12pm in the Ocean Front Village Craft Room. Gentle socializing and participant led discussions about grief and loss. Coffee/tea and light refreshments i Register online comoxhospice.com or call 250-871-0696 ext 1, or email reception@comoxhospice.com.

UnHappy Hour - A monthly group that meets on the 4th Thursday from 5:30-7pm in the Ocean Front Village Craft Room. Gentle socializing and participant led discussions about grief and loss. Coffee/tea and light refreshments i Register online comoxhospice.com or call 250-871-0696 ext 1, or email reception@comoxhospice.com.

Grief 101 - An educational info session about grief and loss in three modules, held at the CVHS Family Room on the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Wednesdays of the month. Attend them in any order. Register online at comoxhospice.com/grief-101 or call 250-871-0696 ext 1.

- Module 1 - An Overview on the Complexity of Grief
- Module 2 - Now What? Normalizing Grief
- Module 3 - Becoming a Grief Ally

Self Care Clinic - In-person sessions are offered by volunteers trained in the healing modalities of Reiki or Healing Touch. By appointment only Wednesday afternoons. Call 250.871.0696 ext. 1.

ALERTS

Stormy Weather and High Wind Events

Be cautious when walking on forested trails when the weather turns stormy and wet. Trails can be slippery and winds can dislodge branches, or cause unstable trees to fall, during, or shortly after a storm. Let others know where you are going and when you expect to be back.

Fluctuating River Heights

Seasonal rains and spring runoff can cause flooding in some low-lying areas around local rivers. Please maintain a safe distance when waterways are flowing high and fast; and only go as close as you feel safe to do so.

For the Puntledge River Walks, be aware that the Puntledge River Generating Station will sound a siren to indicate when the water level is about to change rapidly. Promptly move away from the river area when you hear the siren.



An Encounter with Wildlife is Always Possible

As the park is used by the public on a regular basis, and may produce garbage that attracts wildlife, it's recommended that you don't carry food and please dispose of any waste in the receptacles provided. Be mindful of dogs that may be loose. We have also included some tips from the provincial wildlife conservation website, to help minimize risk should you happen to encounter a black bear, cougar, or deer in nature.

If you see a black bear:

- Remain calm and use a quiet monotone voice
- Try to distance yourself from the bear by slowly backing away
- Keep your eye on the bear without making direct eye contact
- Ensure the bear is able to avoid you with a clear escape route
- Do not feed them or try to approach them
- Do not run, kneel, or try to climb a tree
- Continue only after the bear has left the area and you feel it is safe to do so.
- Ensure you are not carrying anything that would attract them

If you see a cougar:

- Keep the cougar in front of you at all times
- Do what you can to make yourself appear as large as possible
- Never run or turn your back as this may provoke an attack
- If it shows interest in you, respond aggressively by maintaining eye contact, show your teeth and make loud noises
- Arm yourself with rocks or sticks to fight back if necessary focusing on its face and eyes
- Leave the area when it is safe to do so

If you see a deer:

- Keep your distance and do not approach it
- Allow the deer to have an escape route

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CVHS respectfully acknowledges that these nature walks take place on the unceded traditional territory of the K'òmok's First Nation.

We gratefully acknowledge the following organizations whose walking wellness programs were the inspiration for CVHS Nature Walks Program:

- Bloedel Reserve's "Stroll from Home Program"
- Missouri Botanical Garden's "Journey for Wellness"
- Morikami Museum and Japanese Garden's "Stroll for Well-Being"
- Niagara Hospice's "Mindful Hiking Group"

We also recognize and appreciate the dedication and hard work of the CVHS Nature Walks Development Team.

CVHS Nature Walks Program includes:

- Air Park Amble
- Puntledge River Transition Walk
- Puntledge River Sensory Walk
- Strolls for Wellness Journey Walk
- Strolls for Wellness Aliveness Walk
- Strolls for Wellness - Cycles of Life (Any Location)
- Strolls for Wellness - Trust (Any Location)

While we offer the Nature Walks Program without charge, please consider making a donation to fund CVHS programs, and/or offer a testimonial of your experience that we can share with others.

Visit our website www.comoxhospice.com or call 250-871-0696.