

TLC Abkhazi Garden August 2023 E-News

TLC Executive Director Retires



Happy Retirement Cathy!

The Land Conservancy of BC's executive director, Cathy Armstrong, is retiring in September.

Cathy has been described as a debt beating, land saving executive director who makes a difference, one property at a time. In 2015, Cathy worked under the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act to find solutions to TLC's financial troubles. TLC of BC eliminated an \$8 million dollar debt in four years and kept Abkhazi Garden as one of TLC's protected properties.

Today, TLC is on a firm financial foundation and is active in protecting and restoring the biological diversity of BC. Cathy has helped protect over 247 acres of land and negotiated the ground-breaking agreement to transfer SISØENEM (Halibut Island) to the WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council.

Introducing TLC's New Executive Director



Congratulations Dianna!

TLC's Board of Directors has selected Dianna Stenberg, TLC's Deputy Executive Director since 2018, to be the new executive director.

Dianna has held many roles since starting with the organization in 2008 including creating communication strategies, writing successful grants, facilitating nature programs and supporting staff in various projects. She has been very supportive of all the events at Abkhazi Garden.

Dianna has a Bachelor of Science degree in Physics from the University of Victoria and a Master of Arts degree in Professional Communication from Royal Roads where she focused on communicating climate change resilience-building and mitigation strategies.

Volunteer Gardener Runs for TLC Board Position



One of our Tuesday Garden volunteers, Penny Crawford, is running to be on TLC's Board of Directors. If successful at the AGM on September 23, Abkhazi Garden will have representation on TLC board.

Penny is a retired, senior human resources professional who has been volunteering at Abkhazi Garden for over two years. Penny grew up weeding and watering her family's large vegetable garden, helped her dad with beekeeping and worked at a garden centre

Penny is an active environmentalist who has been involved with the movement to save old growth trees in BC for the past two years. She would like a greater role in protecting land, plants, animals and water as a TLC of BC board member and she is keen on representing Abkhazi Garden at the board level.

Recogniton of Abkhazi Volunteer on CHEK TV



Featured on CHEK Vital People program on July 2.



Abkhazi Garden is very lucky to have a handyman extraordinaire.

Jim has designed many structures to enhance the beauty of our garden.

He recently designed a beautiful gate that leads to the service area.

Thank you, Jim, for being one of the Garden's many vital people.

Volunteer Appreciaton BBQ



We now have over 60 volunteers who help operate Abkhazi Garden. We were delighted that over 40 volunteers came to our second annual BBQ in July that was delicious and nutritious.

We are very grateful to Barb, owner/operator of the Teahouse, who let us take over the garden, use the BBQ and who donated two Afternoon Teas for Two for a draw.

We would also like to thank The Land Conservancy and Thrifty Foods Fairfield for sponsoring this event.

A New Supporter of Abkhazi Garden



We would like to welcome Zurab Ivanishvilli as one of our supporters of Abkhazi Garden. Zurab is a Georgian Canadian who is interested in protecting and promoting Prince Nicolas's legacy.

Zurab is working with Geoff Bird, who produced the documentary, 'Abkhazi Garden – Sanctuary from War', on making the film accessible to wider Georgian audiences.

Zurab appreciates our volunteers, "What the Victoria Community and volunteers did and continue to do for the garden is nothing short of heroism, and as a Georgian-Canadian I want to say a most sincere thank-you to you and your team, the TLC and all the related individuals!"

Remains of Abkhazi Palace in Georgia



Zurab was visiting Georgia in May of this year and took this picture of the palace in Kardenaxi where Nicolas' family lived. Although it is now in a state of ruin, Zurab remarked that there was a time at the end of the 19th century, when this palace was thriving and was even visited by the Tsar Alexander.

Nicolas rarely spoke about his palace life in Georgia. He shared a story about a toy electric train that ran through the Abkhazi Palace hallways. He also mentioned that a young Josef Stalin visited a palace where Stalin's mom worked as a laundry woman when Nicolas' dad, Kote Abkhazi, was a child. (p. 164 A Curious Life)

Peggy's First Home in Shanghai



Both Nicolas and Peggy lived a life of tragedy and privilege. Nicolas grew up in a palace and Peggy lived in a grand house in Shanghai as a young child.

The picture here shows William and Mabel Carter (Peggy's biological parents) and servants outside their house in Shanghai.

In this house, a very young Peggy was 'lavished with care and given every luxury and had a complete floor of the house devoted to her.' She had an English nanny, a wet nurse, a wash amah and a nursery amah. (p 21 A Curious Life)

Peggy's and Nicolas's Home in Victoria



Once reunited after the Second World War, Peggy and Nicolas went over the plans for their new home in Victoria with architect, John Wade who liked to design buildings to fit within the surrounding landscape.

Their modest home was limited in size due to city building regulations and due to the small level foundation for construction. (p 170 A Curious Life) According to the City of Victoria Archives, the estimated cost of this house was \$13,000 which is considerably more than the cost of the property. Peggy paid \$1850 for the large treed and rocky lot in 1946.

House construction started in early 1947 under the supervision of builder, Edwin J Hunter. Peggy and Nicolas moved into their new home in the summer of 1948 before the plumbing and electrical work was completed. (p 172 A Curious Life) (Photo of house courtesy of the UVic Archives)

Repairing the Terrace in Front of the House



The Atkinson family laid the rock for the terrace in front of the Abkhazi house about 75 years ago. (Photo courtesy of UVic Archives).

There have been many repairs made over the years. Over time the terrace rocks continue to crack, creating a tripping hazard.

We are very lucky that our volunteer Ron has offered to repair the terrace broken rocks this summer.

On the Path to a New Driveway



TLC is planning to transform the current driveway that is uneven and cracked and has significant heaving in places into a walkway/driveway that is safe for our mobility challenged guests and for all our other visitors. The project will regrade the slope, so it is less steep and even the surface to remove tripping hazards.

The new walkway/driveway will be designed with environmental standards in mind. We are planning to remove and recycle the old asphalt and replace it with a permeable surface of gravel with brick paver borders and add more bike racks.

The new design will elevate the aesthetics of the garden while providing a safer experience for our 22,000+ visitors. TLC executive director, Cathy Armstrong has recently applied for a BC Gaming capital grant to help fund this project. We are hoping to upgrade the driveway to a walkway/driveway next March.

Where in the Garden is Jacqui Now?



Jacqui is in the upper bedrock above the Gunnera and opposite the Georgian Garden. With help of our volunteers, Jacqui has exposed the bedrock in this area and added in plants in the deeper soil.

Jacqui has planted some Hydrangeas and Hummingbird Bushes to bring some more colour to this area. She has planted a Kiwi vine at the base of the snag (dead tree still standing).

Jacqui will be giving a tour of the garden in October for volunteers to view changes and learn about changes planned for the garden's Garry Oaks.

Flower and Plant Display



Maureen has been volunteering as a gate greeter for over 14 years. She helps update our plant books and shares her plant knowledge with thousands of visitors each year.

After Joe Harvey retired (we miss you Joe), Maureen took on managing the flower plant stand.

Maureen will be away for the 5 Fridays in September, and we are looking for someone to do the flower display. Please let Cherie or Jacqui know if you would like to help.

Are there Ghosts in the Garden?



Miss Willmott (Aug 19, 1858- Sep 27, 1934) inherited wealth and transformed her garden at Warley place in Essex England to become one of Britian's most famous gardens. Willmott was known as an avid and obsessive gardener and won many horticultural awards.

As she grew older, Miss Willmott suffered from a form of dementia and became quite eccentric. She would take seeds of the prickly species *Eryngium Giganticum* (commonly called sea holly) and scatter them in other people's gardens to disrupt their gardens. This plant became known as Miss Willmott's Ghost. (pp 16-17 'The Door Was Opened' The Linnean Special Issue NO 10)

We have several ghosts in our garden as pictured here. Have a wonder and you will find them.

Upcoming Events in September



Art Show Fundraiser – starts in the garden (weather permitting) on Labour Day Monday, Sep 4th from 11am – 4pm. Art moves into the Teahouse on Sep 5 until Oct 9th on Thanksgiving Monday when it is open to the public. 11am- 3pm

Grandparents Day Open house – on Sunday, Sep 10th. Free admission. 11am-5pm. Last entrance at 4pm.

Abkhazi Garden Fall Plant Sale - on Sunday, Sep 10th. 11am-4pm.

International Day of Peace – Special event with local schools to recognize International Day of Peace on Thursday, Sep 21.