



Tod Inlet: A Healing Place

Gwen Curry

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Tod Inlet has been a place of refuge for hundreds, if not thousands, of years, but few are aware of its history. This tiny fjord, less than a half hour from downtown Victoria, is part of Gowlland/Tod Provincial Park and is accessed by a forested path beside Tod Creek. For centuries it was the home of the WSÁNE? (Saanich) people, providing everything for their spiritual and material sustenance. In the early part of the twentieth century a small company town grew on its shores. Houses, a railway, a clay mill, a factory and a dock for steamships were built for the Vancouver Portland Cement Company. When the cement company had exhausted the limestone quarries, Jennie Butchart began her ambitious cultivation project, Butchart Gardens. Developers made plans for marinas, golf courses and hotels to be built on this quiet inlet, but local citizens, environmentalists, scientists and Native people fought back.

Almost all the buildings have been demolished, but concrete and iron are not easily disposed of, and reminders of the past confront the walker everywhere: shell middens spill into the sea, fruit trees and garden flowers mingle with indigenous plants, and century-old industrial relics litter the creek, the forest and the Inlet. But despite the ravages of the past century, Tod Inlet retains a spirit of peace and renewal. In other environments this clash of the man-made with the natural can create an unsettling mix. Here, time has allowed nature to begin the healing and has morphed into a present that speaks softly of its past.

Gwen Curry takes us on her walks down to the Inlet. Her beautiful photographs capture the spirit of present-day Tod Inlet, while her sensitive prose gives us glimpses into the Inlet's natural, industrial and Native history.

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