

## Ken Wu: Forest Guardian

By Matt J. Simmons

Ken Wu has been actively involved in the environmental movement since childhood. Growing up with a socio-political activist father and an avid love of the outdoors, his future blockading clearcut logging seemed predestined. Wu was part of the now-famous blockade at Clayoquot Sound, to name just one cause he stood behind; now, as president of the Victoria chapter of the Western Canada Wilderness Committee, he fights issues like the deforestation of Vancouver Island's remaining unprotected ancient forests, and works tirelessly to preserve the natural landscape he loves so much.

The time is ripe, he says, for ground to be covered as the overall environmental consciousness of the public reaches a high point. With environmental issues such as climate change making daily news these days, preservation of the environment is an issue that is never far from mind. Wu feels that this overall consciousness will lead to more people becoming politically involved and as a result, long-standing goals will be achieved. Exciting times. The WCWC is striving to achieve funding from the provincial government to purchase private lands and expand areas that are already protected, a goal Wu feels is critical for the Victoria environment.

The alternative to the geographic sprawl? Density. Make a "denser, more liveable city," he says, and the population can still grow without having to knock down 300-year old trees. He says the key to this particular struggle is zoning, but that's another issue in itself. For now, Wu is focused on preservation, education and motivating supporters of the cause.

Wu tips a few of the preserved CRD parks as being ideal local destinations to go get a taste of the places we'll lose if the development, logging and urban sprawl is allowed to continue. "There's no substitute for going out and seeing nature," Wu says. "It's vital to get out there. And going hiking and camping certainly has less of an impact than clearcut logging." Francis-King, adjacent to Thetis Lake, John Dean and East Sooke parks are all perfect local spots to check out, he says.

Asked & Answered:

- What's one thing Victoria needs?

A light rail transit system that connects the Western Communities to downtown Victoria. It'll help get more cars off the road.

- What's Victoria's best kept secret?

The magnificent heritage grove of ancient Douglas firs in Francis King Regional Park. They're as big as the trees in Cathedral Grove, but few people seem to know about them.

- Where's your favourite brunch spot?



The Cafe Vieux Montreal: it's quite unique for this city, which is slowly emerging from a terrible legacy of bland anglo food.

- What's the best way to spend a rainy day?

At the Royal BC Museum. It's Canada's best museum, speaking as a museum buff. A few years ago I got an annual pass and worked my way through all the displays and their write-ups over the course of a year.

- Where's the best view?

Creyke Point in East Sooke Regional Park. It has a great view of the Olympic Mountains, Rocky Point and Race Rocks, is surrounded by ancient arbutus trees covered in hanging lichens; plus sea lions, otters and the occasional whale swim down below.

- Where's the first place you'd take out-of-towners?

Usually Goldstream Provincial Park to show them the 12-foot-wide old-growth Red cedars, the "skinny but tall" Niagara Falls and, in the fall, the thousands of spawning salmon.

- Who's an essential person to know in town?

The fat seal with the double chin and one eye, begging for food at Fisherman's Wharf. It's quite incredible to see a wild seal so close. They're like little water dogs.

- What's your ideal way to relax?

In the Castle Grove of giant Red cedars in the Upper Walbran Valley, only a two-and-a-half-hour drive from Victoria. Although currently under threat, it's a real wilderness with solitude, a good place to take a nap on the banks of the Emerald Pool . . . except for the mosquitoes in June, and the odd meandering cougar or black bear.