



## The Possibility of Sasquatch

by Joe Foy

**M**y relationship with BC's elusive Sasquatch began early on. I was born in 1954 in Langley, where my parents owned a chicken farm. Our neighbour at that time was an old-timer who grew strawberries, and spun Sasquatch tales.

According to my parents, to hear our neighbour tell it, he had actually been abducted by a Sasquatch while on a hunting trip. He had been packed and dragged around by the beast, up and down the mountainsides and forest-choked gullies for several days before escaping.

One time in the 1980s, while hiking back from Slollicum Lake near Harrison Hot Springs, I came upon a young fellow packing a rifle. He ex-

plained that for the past several years he had been making the journey out from Saskatchewan on his annual holiday to look for Sasquatch. He'd not had any luck so far – but he was still hopeful. After I left the guy, I kept looking back over my shoulder

Recently there have been calls from former logging towns, like Port Renfrew and Tofino, to end the logging of old-growth forests.

as I hiked back down the mountain to make sure no one – or nothing – was following me.

In the 1990s, while working on the campaign that would result in the designation of the Pinecone Burke Provincial Park located north of Pitt

Meadows, I encountered some of the thickest bush and steepest mountains I had ever travelled through. I wasn't working there very long before I ran into a logger who swore that he had once seen the shaggy spirit giant standing on a gravel bar in the upper Pitt River Valley.

I have come to believe that Sasquatch habitat is special. It needs to be big enough and bushy enough and wet enough and steep enough to make you believe that maybe, just maybe, there's a Sasquatch around the other side of the big tree up ahead resting in the sword ferns. It takes an awful lot of wild, mysterious country to contain a thought like that. That's probably why I love being in Sasquatch country so much.

Sasquatch stories are changing with the passing decades. At one time it was not uncommon to hear of people, like our neighbour at the farm, who had close and very personal encounters with the mysterious denizen of the coastal forests. In later decades, as wilderness areas shrank due to logging, mining, roads, and dams, Sasquatch stories mostly focused on footprints found near logging roads and grainy camera images.

My favourite recent story doesn't have a real Sasquatch in it at all – just a brave act in defence of classic Sasquatch habitat. Early this year, a fellow decided to set up a one-man roadblock to protest logging operations in southern Vancouver Island's Walbran Valley. In this area, some of BC's finest old-growth forests are being chainsawed down by a logging

company. Leading up to his peaceful encounter with the police, the protester donned a Sasquatch costume. A friend filmed the event and posted it on Facebook.

It's a reminder of the personal sacrifice many people have made to expand protection for BC's wild places. I believe that the growing public awareness of the Walbran Valley, and the continuing hard work and sacrifice of forest defenders, will eventually result in this amazing area of ancient forest being granted the full protection it deserves.

In a strange turn of events, the very protected area named for BC's symbol of wild mystery – Sasquatch Provincial Park – recently came under threat. In 2013, a logging company proposed a scheme to run logging trucks through the park to cut down

a nearby forest designated as spotted owl habitat. Spotted owls, as you may know, are now almost as rare as Sasquatch in BC.

The good news is that many local people banded together to help protect this much-loved park. For now, it seems the logging truck plan has lost steam, and I have to believe that it will eventually be dropped for good. I learned at a young age that if you can believe in the possibility of Sasquatch, then just about anything is possible.



Joe Foy is the national campaign director for the Western Canada Wilderness Committee, Canada's largest citizen-funded membership-based wilderness preservation organization.

Photos by Joe Foy.

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