

The Very Special Place Where We Live

In November 2020, a *History of Dean Park Estates* was printed in our newsletter. Today's article describes the significance of the area to the W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples. A third article will be published later that will provide more information on John Dean himself who donated his land to create the provincial park which is such an asset to all area residents.

The area on the top of Mount Newton and the surrounding area figure prominently in First Nations culture, especially to the W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples and it has been called ŁÁU,WELNEW̱ for centuries. A wonderful fireside video of the legend being told to children by a local Elder can be found on this link - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=APQJnL74e5o>

The legend tells of a great flood and how the people survived. Using a giant cedar rope, they tied their canoe to a large tree on the hill which was the highest point of land in the area. The ancestors were able to live there on dried salmon until the floodwaters subsided. Once they were safe, they named the place ŁÁU,WELNEW̱ (which means Place of Refuge). Early descriptions of the mountain mention large rings of white stones placed there by the W̱SÁNEĆ people indicating it continued to be used for ceremonies and events. For more on the W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples, visit their website using this link. <https://wsanec.com/history-territory/#legend>

John Dean Provincial Park was created in 1921 but was renamed ŁÁU,WELNEW̱/John Dean Park after a request from ŁÁU,WELNEW̱ Tribal School students in 2019. Here is a link that explains how that change was made. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/indigenous-john-dean-park-saanich-vancouver-island-legislature-1.5119986>

ŁÁU,WELNEW̱/John Dean Provincial Park protects one of the last stands of old-growth Douglas fir and Garry oak on the Saanich Peninsula. It is a popular destination for local residents, who visit the park to hike in a pristine wilderness environment and enjoy the spectacular views. In the spring, the park comes alive with a vivid display of wildflowers, including drifts of blue camas lilies, common red paintbrush, sea blush and shooting stars. From the top of Mount Newton you can watch as ravens, red-tailed hawks, bald eagles, and turkey vultures soar above. The summit of Mount Newton is an excellent location to watch the best sunsets on Vancouver Island.

We are grateful to live in such a special place. DPECA respectfully acknowledges the territory on which we live, work and play as the present and ancestral homelands of the W̱SÁNEĆ nations. The W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples have lived on this land since time immemorial. <https://wsanec.com/>