

Chapter Activist Profile

Suzy Coulter and Wendy Major,
Chilliwack, B.C.



Wendy Major and Suzy Coulter are two of the founding members of British Columbia's Chilliwack chapter.

Suzy Coulter and Wendy Major are founding members of the Council of Canadians' Chilliwack chapter. Chilliwack is a city located in the Fraser Valley about 100 kilometres outside of Vancouver in British Columbia. The two women were working together on local issues even before the chapter formed. In the same spirit in which they do their work, we'll be highlighting them both this issue.

What do you see as upcoming chapter priorities?

Wendy: Concerns were raised in 2011 around tar sands and heavy product transportation through an old Kinder Morgan pipeline, which was proposed to be twinned and carry triple its present amount. The proposed route is planned through very urban neighbourhoods, public schoolyards and pristine waterways. Compounding this is a diminishing protection of the Agricultural Lands Reserve (ALR) and its ability to protect farms from being sold for non-food use. The ALR was established in 1973 to encourage local food production.

Suzy: We may have a Blue Communities push and, of course, the federal election and getting out the vote in this long-time Conservative stronghold. We will also be raising awareness about the B.C. Water Sustainability Act.

What ongoing issues does the Fraser Valley have?

Suzy: The folks we connect with around here are concerned a lot about protecting water, revitalizing democracy, protecting wild salmon, preserving farmland, stopping bitumen pipeline expansion, and protect-

ing the Fraser River. As settlers and occupiers, we are learning how to better be allies to the Sto:lo people whose territory we live on. We want to comprehend the truth stated in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations and help push for the adoption of these recommendations at our community level.

How do you connect with others?

Wendy: This spring we connected with WaterWealth, a local NGO working on B.C.'s proposed Water Sustainability Act. The Chilliwack Naturalists and Sto:lo tribal council were also part of the Water Week event in March. We organized a protest march against the proposed Aevitas Hazardous Waste plant. We want it relocated – we don't agree with the plans to build it on floodplain 500 metres away from the banks of the Fraser River. We also joined the Protect the Fraser Coalition.

Suzy: We are presently working hard to reach out with Council of Canadians blogs and publications and events around research and analysis to encourage voters in the "Go Vote" campaign for the October 19 federal election. We are glad to see our group's numbers increasing at each monthly meeting as the community becomes more familiar with who we are.

What keeps you committed to social justice work in your community?

Suzy: We feel as though there is no choice – social justice work is pretty much the only thing that makes sense in this upside down world, other than hanging out with loved ones, including

my dogs, goats and chickens, and growing healthy food.

Wendy: I first arrived in Chilliwack in 1967 and raised my family on a hobby farm. We appreciate what a fascinating region and rich history this part of Canada holds. Over the years my friends and family have come to understand how good neighbours need to collaborate together to protect this special environment.

What else do you do outside of your activism that's important to you?

Suzy: I am working on building and regenerating an off-grid self-sufficient (hopefully!) homestead with my partner and other family members.

Wendy: I am an oil pastel artist who enjoys depicting the amazing environmental landscapes of this province. This summer's drought has been shocking – seeing the water levels decline rapidly and temperatures rise.

For more information about how to join a chapter in your area, visit our website at www.canadians.org/chapters or call us toll-free at 1-800-387-7177.



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