

Botanie Valley

SITE #060301

GC1TQCY

Written & Researched by Peter McArthur

SITE IDENTIFICATION

Nearest Community: Lytton, V0K 1Z0
 Location: N 50°22.743'
 W 121°32.866'
 Geocache Location: N 50°22.802'
 W 121°32.890'
 Accuracy: 11 meters
 Letterboxing Clues: Refer to letterboxing clues page
 UTM: East 0603224;
 North 5581893 10U
 Geocache altitude: 1,127 m./3,696 ft.
 Overall difficulty: 1
 Terrain difficulty: 2.5
 (1=easiest; 5=hardest)
 Date Established: 1926
 Ownership: Crown Land & First Nations
 Access: • Gravel Road
 • Year-round
 • Vehicle accessible
 • *Detailed access information on next page.*

For more information or to report a problem with this site please contact:
 Gold Country Communities Society
 P.O. Box 933 Cache Creek, B.C. V0K 1H0
 Tel: 1-877-453-9467
 email: info@exploregoldcountry.com

For more site pages go to:
www.goldtrail.com or
www.GeoTourismCanada.com

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Photo: Peter Wratschun

In 1926, with horse-powered scrapers, an earthen dam was built high up in the Botanie Valley creating a small picturesque lake. The dam provided much needed water to the hot, dry benches of the Fraser River valley, allowing the development of early farming and settlement. One of the original scrapers is on display at the Lytton Museum, along with pictures of the original dam construction in 1926 and the rebuild in 1998.

Prior to the dam, the area was a natural meadow, brimming with wild flowers. Used as a gathering place for local First Nations people, the Nlaka'pamux, the Botanie Valley offered shelter from the summer heat. In Lytton, summer temperatures are regularly above 40 degrees Celsius. A vast storehouse of natural products can be obtained from the woods and meadow, where the Nlaka'pamux traditionally gathered berries, roots and animals. The local First Nations still hold a Healing Gathering and other events in the area, supporting a continued connection with nature.

One interesting fact about Botanie Lake is that the dam is on provincial land, but the lake is entirely on First Nations Reserve lands. The dam only flooded the lowest parts of the meadows, which now provide grassy slopes down to the water's edge. The dam was rebuilt in 1998 with modern spillways; however, it retains its natural feel.

The valley is known for its biological diversity. The mouth of the valley is semi-arid and is the natural habitat of prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia fragilis*) and sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*). As the main road climbs, the major flora



Photo: Peter Wratschun



View of the dam

The elevation of Botanie Lake is approximately 1,000 meters, and at the southern end of the lake you can see the former Botanie Mountain Forest Lookout watching over you from the 2,000 meter level. The unmarked lookout road begins roughly 6 km from the bottom of the Botanie main road, switching back and forth up the mountain for nearly 3 km. If you are able to visit this lookout on a sunny day, the 360-degree view is spectacular.

Botanie is the name of the lake, valley and mountain, derived from the Thompson Language, the language of the Nlaka'pamux people. The language was

quickly changes to Ponderosa Pines (*Pinus ponderosa*) and Fir (*Pseudotsuga Menziesii*), with Saskatoon Berry (*Amelanchier spp*) understory. The wild flowers range from common Columbine (*Aquilegia formosa*), Indian Paintbrush (*Castilleja spp.*), wild Sunflowers or Balsam root (*Balsamorhiza sagittata*), to a rare white bunching ladyslipper. The road continues into coastal rain forest vegetation, such as Cedar (*Thuja plicata*) and Amabilis Fir (*Abies Amabilis*). On the mountain slopes above the tree line you can find tundra and approximately 5 kilometers past Botanie Lake is the Skwaha Ecological Reserve. If you choose to journey further to explore Skwaha, please ensure you plan ahead and contact both Lytton First Nations and Parks Staff for permission to access this protected area. You may reach Kamloops, Water, Air and Land Protection Office at 250-371-6200.

not a written language; therefore, there are several English versions of the translation including Pootanie, Botany and Botannie. The correct pronunciation is boo-TAN-y, with emphasis on the second syllable. Three translations of the name's meaning include: 'Blanket of Flowers', 'Blanket of Cloud' and 'Blanketed'. In any language, the valley is breathtakingly beautiful.

Detailed access information:

- From Lytton, head north on Hwy #12, then turn right just past the bridge onto Botanie Valley Rd.
- Travel 17km to the Botanie Rec Site.
- Please honour the 'No Trespassing' sign posted at the cattleguard, this is First Nations land and permission must be sought to access beyond the dam.

BIBLIOGRAPHY & SOURCES

Cumming, I. (2005). Wildflowers of Skwaha Ecological Reserve. Retrieved February 2, 2009, from Flowers of Botanie Ecological Reserve, Lytton, BC Web site: <http://www.ece.ubc.ca/~ianc/Botanie3/>

Dodge, D. (2009). Personal Interview, curator Lytton Museum.

Lyons, C. (1976). *Trees, Shrubs & Flowers to Know in British Columbia*. Lone Pine Publishing.