THE WESTWARD INDEPENDENT



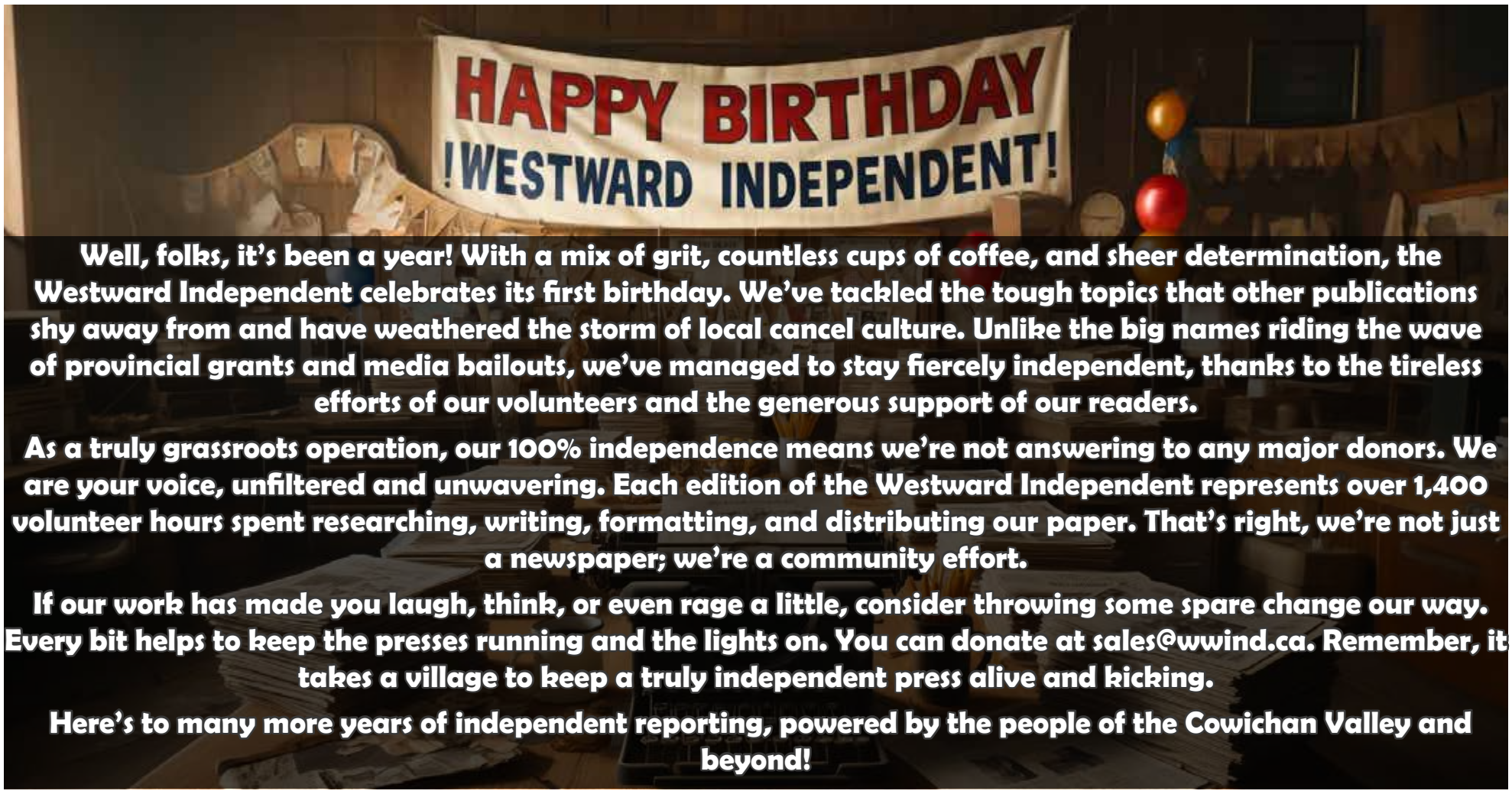
WHEN HOME FEELS UNSAFE: THE ALARMING REALITY IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

More than half of British Columbians fear living in their own communities. Let that sink in for a moment. How can that be acceptable?

Are B.C. citizens meant to simply hang their heads and wring their hands before carrying on their daily lives? We would hope not. A recent Research Co. province-wide public opinion survey found that more than half of British Columbians think crime has increased over the past four years; 51 % personally fear falling victim to crime.

The Business Improvement Association of B.C.,a Save Our Streets coalition member and representing tens of thousands of businesses throughout BC, has identified street disorder and crime and staff/customer safety as a key issue facing main streets and downtowns in B.C. While we get caught up in debating decriminalization and safe supply, those committing crimes to feed their habits are dying and often fighting mental illness. We must focus on programs that provide the best opportunity to help them put their addictions and life of crime behind them and give them the very best chance of returning to their families and communities as healthy, productive members of society. A comprehensive continuum of care is urgently needed on a regional basis to provide immediate detox and health evaluation, followed by treatment and recovery. These options are not available in many areas of B.C. and this lack of resources means wait lists and travel. Survivors of detox and treatment cannot simply be dumped back into housing surrounded by those still suffering from addictions and the drug pushers who prey upon them. Our governments need to stop finger-pointing at each other and work together. We advocate establishing a full continuum of care for those suffering from addiction and mental illnesses, including real-time monitoring of how many people are suffering from both addiction and mental illnesses in B.C. Other measures include recognizing which legislation and policies are required to speed up the judicial system, halt the revolving door for repeat violent offenders and eliminate the hurdles faced by police in gathering intelligence, investigating crimes, and laying charges. Finally, we need to establish key performance measures that can be publicly reported quarterly on a provincial basis to determine whether programs are succeeding. What gets measured, gets managed. Let's reverse the trends. Let's remove the fear.

Jess Ketchum is the co-founder of the Save Our Streets coalition. saveourstreets.ca



Well, folks, it's been a year! With a mix of grit, countless cups of coffee, and sheer determination, the Westward Independent celebrates its first birthday. We've tackled the tough topics that other publications shy away from and have weathered the storm of local cancel culture. Unlike the big names riding the wave of provincial grants and media bailouts, we've managed to stay fiercely independent, thanks to the tireless efforts of our volunteers and the generous support of our readers.

As a truly grassroots operation, our 100% independence means we're not answering to any major donors. We are your voice, unfiltered and unwavering. Each edition of the Westward Independent represents over 1,400 volunteer hours spent researching, writing, formatting, and distributing our paper. That's right, we're not just a newspaper; we're a community effort.

If our work has made you laugh, think, or even rage a little, consider throwing some spare change our way. Every bit helps to keep the presses running and the lights on. You can donate at sales@wwind.ca. Remember, it takes a village to keep a truly independent press alive and kicking.

Here's to many more years of independent reporting, powered by the people of the Cowichan Valley and beyond!

WW INDEPENDENT

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Quantum Healing

While modern, mainstream science does not have the tools to describe or quantify the mechanics and functioning of energy healing modalities in general, many people experience benefits from a wide range of practices, be it quantum healing, reiki or a host of others. As quantum physics now postulates, it is a blurred line between particle and wave.

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TRUDEAU'S 'HATE SPEECH' LAW

"Hate speech" law - retroactive punishment and monetary compensation for the 'snitches'

Soon after, on February 26th, Trudeau's government introduced the bill. Canada's stable of retreating, credulous on-air personalities announced its rollout like the arrival of penicillin. "Tonight, Web of Harm," gushed CTV's Omar Sachedina. "Tackling online dangers and safeguarding children… The long-awaited framework for protecting the vulnerable…" There was little initial uproar. What could be wrong with increasing child safety, or "protecting the vulnerable"?

Then people read the bill.

"If you look at the purpose of this law, it's actually quite noble and most lawyers would agree with it," says Canadian attorney Dan Freiheit. "Online safety, protecting children's physical and mental health." But the actual text? "It's wild," Freheit says.

Trudeau was lying when he said C-63 was "very, very specifically focused on correcting kids." The purview of the Online Harms Act extends far beyond speech, re imagining society as a mandated social engineering project, creating transformational new procedures that would: enlist Canada's citizens in an ambitious social monitoring system, with rewards of up to $20,000 for anonymous "informants" of hateful behavior, with the guilty paying penalties up to $50,000, creating a self-funded national spying system; introduce extraordinary criminal penalties, including life in prison not just for existing crimes like "advocating genocide," but for any "offence motivated by hatred," in theory any non-criminal offense, as tiny as littering, committed with hateful intent; punish Minority Report pre-crime, where if an informant convinces a judge you "will commit" a hate offense, you can be jailed up to a year, put under house arrest, have firearms seized, or be forced into drug/alcohol testing, all for things you haven't done; penalize past statements. The law gets around prohibitions against "retroactive" punishment by calling the offense "continuous communication" of hate, i.e. the crime is your failure to take down bad speech; force corporate Internet platforms to remove "harmful content" virtually on demand (within 24 hours in some cases), the hammer being fines of "up to 6% of… gross global revenue."

Things you're saying, things you've already said, things an administrative judge thinks you might say, all barred, with neighbors deputized as enforcers? Good times. Leave it to Trudeau, a frequent trailblazer in new forms of illiberalism in the digital age, to come up with this quantum leap downward on the rights front. C-63 is a Frankenstein's Monster combining the worst censorship ideas already deployed by supposed ally government-in-laws like Europe's Digital Services Act, Australia's updated Australian Communications and Media Authority Act (ACMA), and Scotland's Hate Crime and Public Order Act, which saw 7,152 complaints in its first week when the law took effect last month.

Trudeau's creation is a turbo-charged social surveillance law aimed first at forcing big platforms like Facebook and Twitter to "self-police," but secondarily targeting individuals and doling out civil and criminal penalties for speech and thought on a scale not seen anywhere. What constitutes hateful conduct? While the bill newly defines hate speech as "likely to foment detestation or vilification" of Canada's growing list of protected groups and individuals, Canadian lawyers interviewed were generally unsure of what the standard might look like in practice.

"It's impossible to know what exactly it's going to mean," says Bruce Pardy, Executive Director of Rights Probe. "So you're going to have to rely upon the court in a criminal prosecution, or the human rights tribunal in a human rights proceeding, to put their own interpretation on that, and figure out where the line is."

Despite being split on how serious the immediate impact might be ("We're not looking at prisons full of people doing life for misgendering" said one), most attorneys seemed to agree C-63 will be a game-changer if passed, aimed beyond speech at the very concept of individual rights, chipping away at ideas like the presumption of innocence and the right to face one's accuser, and using traditionally dubious tools like ex post facto laws.

Excerpt from www.zerohedge.com/markets/blame-canada-justin-trudeau-creates-blueprint-dystopia-horrific-speech-bill

CLEAN UP V9L

ASK THEM WHY!

For possibly the first time in recorded history, three levels of government in British Columbia have banded together with our court system to systematically destroy social cohesion. The obvious effects of government-sponsored drug abuse – poverty, homelessness, and breakdowns in mental health – are laid out on city streets in every town in the province. Our elected representatives who have voted for these measures must now accept personal responsibility for their outcomes.

The federal government started this problem by removing consequences for both users and dealers. Our Member of Parliament, Alistair MacGregor, is a supporter of this program; if you see him on the streets, sitting in his office, or at a public event, **ask him why!**

Our provincial legislators point to their progressive political ideology which allows addicts the right to consume opioids in any location they choose, that is, until screams of public outrage forced a partial reversal of this policy. Now, those legislators are claiming credit for reversing a problem, conveniently forgetting that they themselves created it in the first place. Meanwhile, they cynically ignore organized criminal street gangs who accept government-supplied drugs as currency to buy illegal alternatives with an ever-escalating potency. Drug users push themselves to the limits of their tolerance until, inevitably, they collapse from an overdose; the lucky ones are resuscitated, but too many go one step further and die in a forgotten heap on the sidewalk. Countermeasures are available to help the ones who wish to detoxify, receive treatment, and eventually recover. These are tested and simple to apply but are nowhere in the provincial government's toolkit. There is a provincial election in the offing and candidates from every party will be offering opinions. **Ask them why!**

The majorities on our local regional and municipal governments flaunt their progressive credentials but complain about their federal and provincial counterparts downloading costs. They allow addicts to spend the time between hits to usurp sidewalks and building doorways, light fires to prepare a hit, or burn a dumpster, only moving them out of sight when the media appears. Municipal elections are some months away, but it's not too early to plan to vote. Changing the incumbents will probably need a better turnout than the 22% which seated the problem in Duncan and the 29% which did the same in North Cowichan. In the meantime, there are public meetings; the individual councillors who vote for this mayhem can be found there, at a coffee shop, or in the grocery stores. **Ask them why!**

-CleanupV9L

A task force formed in May 2023 by five Cowichan Valley municipal councillors to seek community and provincial support to limit and eventually terminate the damage done on city streets by drug driven delinquents. All five are in the minority on the Duncan and North Cowichan councils. They are consistently outvoted when they propose remedial measures to address the homelessness, mental health and criminal issues that accompany freeform drug abuse. They have been joined by business people whose income and premises are badly affected and by parents whose children now see weapons and opioids as common presence in schools. The task force is the Cowichan representative on the province-wide Save Our Streets Coalition, an organization formed to bring pressure on provincial and federal authorities to take action to eliminate the problem.

HISTORIC TALES, FROM LOCALS AND THEIR FAMILIES



Photo: Clutch of Circumstance

The book "The Clutch of Circumstances - Reminiscence of Members of the Canadian National Prisoners of War Association", published in 1985 was shared with staff by a local surviving family member of Gwen Dopson whose story of her family's captivity was included.

In the book, we can read of one family's journey through the tumultuous era of World War II. Set against the backdrop of the vibrant Orient, the narrative unfolds with the tale of Gwen Dopson, a woman whose life was abruptly altered by the winds of war.

Born Gwen Lakeman in London, England, Gwen's early years were steeped in the maritime ambiance of her father's naval architect profession. A relocation to Hong Kong when she was 14 ushered her into the captivating embrace of the Orient. Imbued with a keen acumen for commerce, Gwen swiftly immersed herself in the bustling trade milieu of Hong Kong, securing employment with an importer and exporter. Her days were animated by the ascent to The Peak, where her employer's abode overlooked the bustling city below, a vista that etched indelible memories of enchantment in Gwen's heart.

Amidst this vibrant backdrop, Gwen's path intertwined with Leslie Dopson, a dashing Englishman affiliated with the renowned travel firm of Thomas Cook & Co. Their romance blossomed amidst the cosmopolitan allure of Shanghai, where they exchanged vows in the serene confines of the British Consulate. The subsequent years unfurled with a semblance of idyllic tranquillity, punctuated by the birth of their daughter, Vivien, and the harmonious blend of family life against the backdrop of pre-war Eastern opulence.

However, the spectre of conflict loomed ominously on the horizon, shattering the semblance of peace and propelling the Dopson family into the throes of adversity. In the chilling hours of dawn, Japanese officials, wielding swords that ominously clanked against each step, descended upon the Dopson household, shattering the tranquillity of their existence. In a swift and merciless sweep, Leslie Dopson was forcibly apprehended, leaving Gwen and her children ensnared in a web of uncertainty and fear.

In one fell swoop all British, Canadian and American residents were being rounded up. It was taken for granted that all the bigger businessmen, including the Cook's representative, must be secret agents for Britain. Dopson was ordered to dress immediately and was taken away. The family had an extensive library, which was at once locked up and sealed, later searched for "subversive literature." Then began the uneasy, frustrating period of supervised, restricted, partial freedom that all allied families, caught in the Orient, suffered before their ultimate incarceration. Gwen, like the rest, must wear an armband and a number. She must queue outside commandeered buildings to hand in such things as radios, record players and cameras.

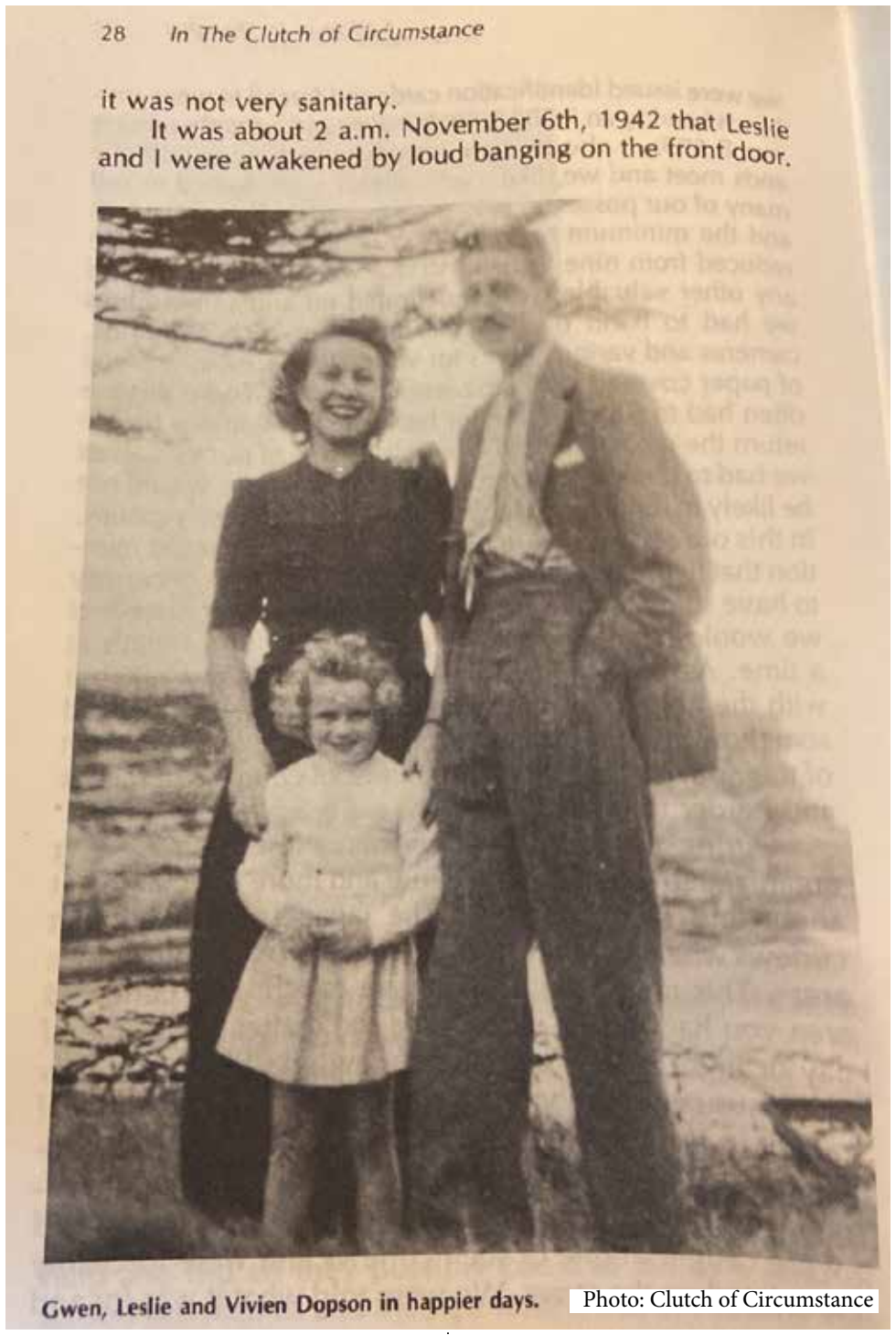
After six months of partial freedom, Gwen received 24 hours' notice to pack for relocation. She cleverly packed essentials into an overturned daybed and moved to Ash Camp, designated for women with young children. The conditions were dire, with rat-infested huts and scarce provisions. Gwen worked in the kitchens, cooking for 420 prisoners and improvising with soya beans to provide sustenance. The rainy season exacerbated their plight, flooding the camp and forcing everyone to wear clogs.

The camp commandant posed another threat with his drunken, full moon-induced roll calls. Food supplies dwindled as Red Cross packages were intercepted, leaving prisoners to survive on contaminated grain. Visits to husbands were rare and fraught with delays. Gwen discovered Leslie had been moved to a prison hospital, gravely ill. Despite subsequent medical treatments in Australia and Canada, Leslie's health never fully recovered.

Liberation brought its own challenges. The Dopsons avoided returning to their wartime home, fearing what they might find, and eventually moved to Canada, settling in Williams Lake. Adapting to rural Canadian life was tough, but Gwen and Leslie faced it with determination. Gwen opened an office for hospital insurance, while Leslie worked for the motor vehicles branch, creating the digit system for car licenses used in British Columbia.

In the aftermath of war's tumult, the scars of captivity lingered as Leslie Dopson, once a stalwart beacon of strength, succumbed to the ravages of illness, his health irreparably compromised by the trials of imprisonment. Leslie passed away in 1959, leaving Gwen to continue her journey alone. She joined the Montreal Trust Company and found solace in her apartment with a harbor view in Victoria B.C, reflecting on the incredible resilience that had brought her to this point.

Gwen Dopson's story is a powerful testament to the endurance and adaptability of those who lived through the turmoil of war, and whose descendants live to keep their stories alive.



Gwen, Leslie and Vivien Dopson in happier days. Photo: Clutch of Circumstance

CITIZENS CHALLENGE UN INTEGRATION IN LOCAL POLICIES

As we see municipalities, cities, and Regional Districts sign on to United Nations declarations, in fact the new Duncan OCP has integrated it right into it as policy, councils start feeling pushback all over the country from regular concerned citizens.

A private members bill was passed through the House Of Commons asking that Canada remove itself from United Nations agendas. The petition contained wording such as:" Canada's membership in the United Nations (UN) and its subsidiary organizations, (e.g. World Health Organization (WHO)), imposes negative consequences on the people of Canada, far outweighing any benefits; Canada's agreement to participate in the UN/WHO comprehensive "Agenda 2030" undermines national sovereignty and personal autonomy;Agenda 2030 and secretly negotiated amendments to the IHR could likely impose unacceptable, intrusive universal surveillance, violating the rights and freedoms guaranteed in the Canadian Bill of Rights and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms; We, the undersigned, Citizens and Residents of Canada, call upon the House of Commons in Parliament assembled to urgently implement Canada's expeditious withdrawal from the UN and all of its subsidiary organizations, including WHO."

The Bill was signed by 90,089 citizens, but turned down with a lengthy response adamantly stating Canada will be staying loyal to the UN agendas and the WHO with some wording contained within that stated:

" Response by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Signed by (Minister or Parliamentary Secretary): Rob Oliphant - The role of any Canadian government is to protect Canada and the best interests of Canadians. We must do so on the world stage, and the United Nations (UN) is a necessary and important platform for Canada to exercise its sovereignty, amplify its voice, to influence, build partnerships, and work collectively toward a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world. The current Government of Canada will remain part of the United Nations, and its subsidiary organizations, to accomplish, together with other states, what none of us can do alone; Canadians have played a key role in creating our international rules and institutions and Canada will continue to ensure that the UN adapts to meet modern challenges. While no organization is perfect, the UN has standards and regulations that are critical to the protection and interests of Canada and Canadians. Therefore, the Government of Canada has committed to increasing our presence at the United Nations and in multilateral institutions. In fact, the Federal Budget in 2024 proposes $18 million over five years to bolster Canada's presence at our mission to the UN in New York; The UN also serves as the central meeting place for states and other stakeholders to meet, listen, negotiate, and develop positive relations among nations, working together to address issues relating to climate change, peace and security, economic development, human rights, disarmament, combating terrorism and extremism, conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, disease prevention, advancing gender equality and universal education, refugee resettlement, humanitarian assistance, advancing the rule of law, and fighting against transnational crime" and so on.

Men and Women have noticed that their local, Provincial, and Federal Governments have alliances that seem to usurp local citizen's wishes, with some folks worried that their concerns may be playing a back bench to global goals, goals beyond the scope of local jurisdictional powers

Staff

SCOTTISH REPORT REVEALS LOW CO2 EMISSIONS OF WOOD-BURNING STOVES

The Scottish government's own report, published in 2021, sheds light on the environmental impact of wood-burning stoves compared to other heating technologies.

Commissioned by the Scottish Forestry quango and conducted by green consultants re: heat, the report challenges the notion that wood-burning stoves are environmentally harmful. In fact, it reveals that wood fuels, particularly local logs, emit significantly lower levels of CO2 compared to both fossil fuel boilers and renewable technologies like ground source heat pumps, solar power, and wind turbines.

The data presented in the report underscores the carbon-saving potential of wood fuels. Local logs, for example, emit just 4 grams of CO2 per kilowatt hour of energy, making them one of the cleanest fuel sources available. This finding is particularly relevant for rural areas of Scotland, where many households rely on wood-burning stoves for heating, especially in regions prone to power cuts.

Contrary to the Scottish government's plan to ban "direct emissions heating systems" in new-build homes and extensions, the report highlights the importance of wood-burning stoves as a sustainable heating option. It argues that wood fuel not only delivers carbon savings compared to fossil fuels but also outperforms most other forms of renewable energy in terms of carbon emissions.

Furthermore, the report challenges the perception that wood fuel is unsustainable by emphasizing the UK's favourable conditions for tree growth. With mild winters, ample rainfall, fertile soil, and hill-sheltered topography, the UK offers ideal conditions for growing trees. This allows for sustainable forestry practices, where trees can be harvested and replanted to maintain a continuous supply of wood fuel.

The review also provides insights into the prevalence of wood-burning stoves in Scotland, estimating that around 117,000 homes use wood fuel for heating. Closed stoves, commonly known as wood burners, and open fires are the most popular heating systems, collectively burning approximately 400,000 green tonnes of wood annually. Additionally, there are around 3,200 wood fuel boilers in commercial properties, including whisky distilleries, further highlighting the widespread adoption of wood fuel as a heating source.

In terms of CO2 emissions, the report ranks wood fuel options, with local logs at the forefront, followed by local wood pellets and imported wood pellets. Even imported wood pellets emit less CO2 than ground-source heat pumps, a renewable technology favoured by some policymakers.

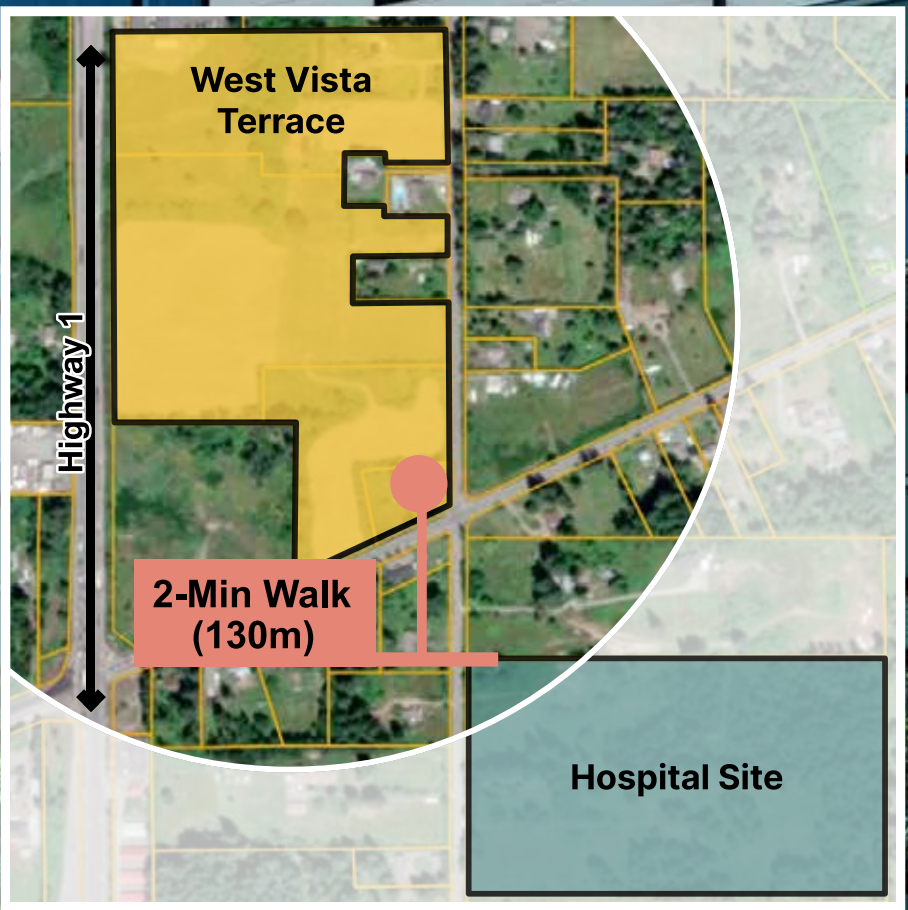
Overall, the findings of the report challenge prevailing assumptions about the environmental impact of wood-burning stoves. By providing empirical evidence of their low CO2 emissions and highlighting their sustainability, the report shows the importance of wood fuel as a viable and environmentally friendly heating option, particularly in rural areas where alternative energy sources may be less reliable or accessible.

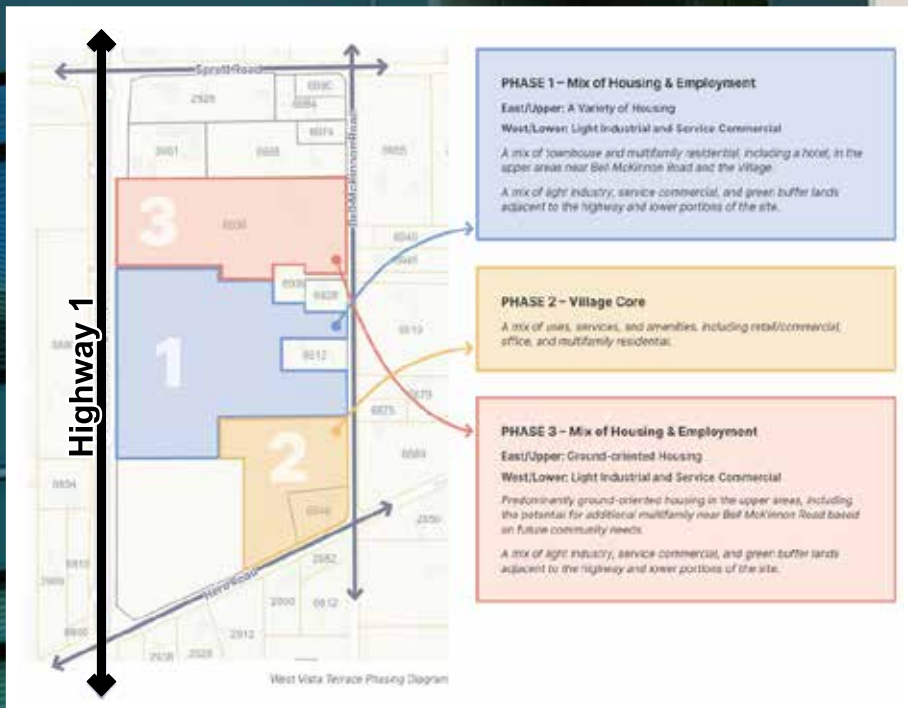




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SOMEONE'S ALWAYS WATCHING...

IT'S US, WE'RE WATCHING.

April:

- Rails to Trails' spokesperson David Slade stated that federal and provincial funds were available for active transportation infrastructure, such as converting the railroad track into walking/biking paths, but not for reviving the railway.

- Students from VIU, in partnership with Arrowsmith Biosphere Region Resource and North Cowichan, presented on 'Natural Asset Accounting' (NAC). This was the first in a three-year project to value 'natural assets,' starting with Richards Creek. They suggested landowners optionally give over 30 to 200 meters of riparian areas for $7.88 per sq km. The mid-section of the study area was priced at $315,450 to maintain. Cllr. Findlay questioned the purpose of assigning a dollar value and its potential burden on taxpayers. The response was to ensure the value is not discounted.

- Cllr. Findlay proposed three motions:

1) A mayoral letter to rehire fired nurses, highlighting that approximately 10,000 healthcare workers left due to provincial Covid-19 vaccine mandates, with 4,000 wishing to return. Cllr. Justice argued against the letter, stating vaccine mandates were a political wedge. Cllr. Manhas criticized the council for not supporting nurses despite backing a local healthcare group. Cllr. Findlay, Manhas, and Caljouw supported the motion.

2) A motion to expedite the approval process for temporary and permanent patio additions for food service establishments, and to send a letter to the provincial government advocating for removing liquor licensing red tape, implementing a trusted owner liquor licensing system, reconsidering minimum wage levels, and freezing WorkSafeBC premiums. The motion to send the letter was only supported by the mayor and Cllr. Findlay. Cllr. Findlay highlighted WorkSafeBC's $2.5 billion excess funds and the impact on struggling restaurants. The motion to freeze WorkSafeBC premiums and reconsider wage levels was defeated, with only Cllr. Findlay and Manhas in favor.

3) A motion to reconsider the accelerated implementation of the BC Zero Carbon Step Code. Cllr. Findlay cited industry concerns about the rapid acceleration and high costs, suggesting better options might be available in six years. Cllr. Justice supported the step code for its long-term benefits. Cllr. Manhas noted the lack of consultation with builders. The motion was defeated, with Cllr. Findlay, Manhas, and Caljouw in favor.

May:

- The Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions replied to Mayor Douglas's request for detox and rehab funding, stating that due to the current fiscal environment, they could not provide financial support to the Municipality of North Cowichan.

- The 1st quarter payments to suppliers over $10k totaled $16,480,872. Cllr. Manhas questioned a $199,510 line item to Young Anderson Barrister & Solicitors, asking if it was for a lawsuit or property purchase, and was told it would be discussed in a closed meeting.

- The 1st quarter report on North Cowichan's strategic plan was presented. Cllr. Justice praised climate action efforts, while Cllr. Findlay suggested updating the 2018 strategic plan due to changes in the council and global context.

- Permissive tax exemptions for nonprofits, charities, and religious groups were discussed, with feedback sought for potential changes. Suggestions included reducing the exemption period from 10 years to 4 years to align with the election cycle. Cllr. Justice proposed aligning exemptions with council goals, including environmental protection, and suggested not excluding groups with large financial resources, like Duck's Unlimited, for strategic reasons.

- Cllr. Findlay noted the cost of exemptions was $601k last year and suggested assessing financial need, as both small organizations and large NGOs were requesting exemptions. Cllr. Toporowski inquired about a council that removed all tax exemptions and suggested a cap. Staff proposed a cap of 1.5% of total taxes. Mayor Douglas mentioned Smithers had removed all exemptions. Cllr. Manhas supported a cap, preferring 1.5% or 1%, while Cllr. Istace suggested a monetary cap instead of one based on property assessment.

UNVEILING GREEN COLONIALISM: THE EXPLOITATIVE REALITY OF CARBON CREDIT DEALS IN AFRICA

In a significant development in the global 'carbon credit scheme', the Liberian government is reportedly in discussions with Blue Carbon LLC, a Dubai-based entity chaired by a member of Dubai's ruling royal family.

The proposed agreement would grant Blue Carbon LLC exclusive rights to utilize a staggering 10 percent of Liberia's land—a parcel exceeding six times the area of London—for the purpose of generating carbon credits. This move, purportedly to align with certain international 'green' agreements, raises grave concerns about sovereignty, transparency, and the welfare of Liberian, and other developing nations, citizen's.

If finalized, the deal would afford Blue Carbon LLC unparalleled control over the designated land for a prolonged period of 30 years, effectively usurping the rights of local communities, their ability to use their own land for wealth, or even carbon credits themselves.

Blue Carbon LLC' grift extends beyond Liberia's borders, with similar agreements reportedly in progress with Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Kenya. These agreements, if realized, would place vast expanses of land under the control of Blue Carbon LLC, disproportionately impacting the lives and livelihoods of countless individuals. The secretive nature of these negotiations has rightly sparked condemnation from experts and civil society organizations, who decry the lack of transparency and public accountability.

Critics have denounced these agreements as modern-day manifestations of land grab or 'carbon colonialism' - the exploitation of vulnerable communities for the benefit of wealthy corporations. The absence of consultation with affected communities exposes the exploitative nature of these deals, which prioritize profit, disguised as a 'climate initiative', over the well-being of local populations.

The proposed carbon credit scheme facilitated by Blue Carbon LLC represents a flagrant disregard for the rights and dignity of those most vulnerable to exploitation. By allowing wealthy polluters to continue business as usual under the guise of environmental stewardship, these agreements perpetuate a cycle of injustice and inequality. The land grab orchestrated by Blue Carbon LLC and similar entities poses a dire threat to the sovereignty and well-being of African nations, and further brings an eye to the hypocrisy often shown by companies with wealth to buy carbon credits, while the 'peasants' such as you and the regular folk, must go more and more 'without' to meet arbitrary carbon goals.

THE ROOSTER WAR: HOW ONE FAMILY'S FARM DREAM BECAME A LEGAL NIGHTMARE



Photo: Alia Elaraj

Do you recall a time when neighbours lent a hand to one another, and small communities thrived on mutual reliance?

Nowadays, we often hear tales of neighbours reporting each other for minor infractions, like having a trailer in the yard for their kids or a tiny home—or, in this case, keeping roosters.

On a modest plot of land on Salt Spring Island, there's a family realizing their dream of a small-scale farm, not just for themselves but to contribute to the community and raise their children. Yet, this dream turned into a nightmare when a neighbour took issue with the roosters' crowing, and later, the dogs on their property.

Initially, when the first complaint arose, a local bylaw officer, who has since retired, empathized with the family, deeming the grievances unjust. Even before the CRD (Capital Regional District) became involved, the family, eager to uphold neighbourly respect in their tight-knit community, invested significant time and money to mitigate the noise. They moved the coop, soundproofed it, and even swapped their roosters for quieter ones, all to no avail as the baseless complaints and citations persisted.

The family meticulously documented their efforts to address the concerns and maintain their farm. False accusations, such as leaving the roosters out at night, something any owner of chickens would know was not a practice, only exacerbated the situation. The family then dealt with multiple bylaw officers, many who seemed to understand their plight, but seemed to be unable to use their own discretion as it seemed the CRD was persistent in their mission.

Upon filing a Freedom Of Information Request, they received a 330-page report revealing the relentless barrage of emails from the neighbours in question to the CRD bylaw, escalating up the administrative ladder.

Attempting to address the issue at a community commission meeting, the family was barred from discussing their rooster predicament by CRD legal counsel. However, many in the community rallied behind them, recognizing the unjust harassment faced by a family that provided chicks to the community.

Bylaw officers frequently trespassed on their property, issuing more tickets. Nearby, another family faced similar complaints and tickets but found relief in court, where the judge emphasized the need to "tread carefully on farmer's rights".

At one juncture, a noise test conducted from the neighbour's house found the roosters well within noise bylaw limits. Later, another test somehow yielded higher levels, to the neighbour's advantage.

Despite the family's persistence and community support, the CRD remained unyielding, escalating the situation to criminal charges carrying hefty fines and potential jail time, removing their ability to just fight the tickets as the other family had done. Leaving the initial visit to the court, the family was slapped with three more tickets, which just felt cruel to them at that point.

A year has passed since the summons was issued, and their day in court was to be on Friday May 17th, where protestors gathered outside. The case ran out of time, so another date was set to continue the second half of the trial. Nonetheless, the community has united behind their cause. Groups like the Salt Spring Poultry Club have organized meetings and fundraisers to help the family secure legal representation as they're determined to stand up not just for themselves, but for all small farmers all over the CRD, and are refusing to be intimidated.

Keep up to date on this story at: www.saltspringpoultry.com. A GoFundMe has been set up for legal fees https://tinyurl.com/ssifarmer

A petition to protect food security on SSI https://tinyurl.com/securityrooster



THE REAL DEAL: CELEBRATING WOMEN AND THEIR JOURNEY THROUGH MOTHERHOOD

What they don't tell you.

When you become a Mother, your heart breaks.

It becomes fragments.

These fragments begin to walk around outside your body.

These fragments are not careful. Not even a little.

They are reckless. Dangerous.

They wear casts, they are stitched back together, they bruise and they bleed.

They are unaware of their fragility.

In your anxious hyper-protective state you will offer everything you have, everything you don't, everything you are, everything you're not, to the forces that be, to try to secure their safety. Their fate.

You want to believe you can. Desperately.

No matter how intelligent you are, how successful in life, how wealthy, how healthy, how soulfully you want it and how much you pray, you will fail at this. Repeatedly.

You will cry.

You will have crippling anxiety.

You will have joy.

You will be proud.

You will be a hero, their greatest love. They will smother you and you'll feel touched out and resentful and guilty at feeling annoyed. Why can't you have one moment? ALONE.

People will tell you that you'll miss this stage.

You'll want to punch them in the face.

Yet you cannot conceive that these chubby legs will grow long, and this soft sweet-smelling head will ever be anywhere other than your chest.

Buckle in.

You will be dumb, annoying, and irrelevant. They will bore at the sound of your droning voice, embarrassed to be witnessed in your company, they will yell, roll their eyes, shut you down, tune you out.

These heart fragments run wild, going too fast, egocentric, breaking free from your bubble of safety and sawing away at your emotional umbilical cord.

They are smart. They are naive. They are just getting warmed up.

And the people you wanted to punch in the face?

They were right.

You do miss "that".

You will wonder what forces of nature snatched up your baby and gave you this moody and defiant changling.

They flash a grin at you. With relief, you can see. They're still in there.

You will be confused. You will be hurt. You will cry. You will be mentally exhausted. You will learn. You will grow. You will be stronger than you ever knew you could be.

Then you will be smart again. You will be a source of advice, a moment of calm, you will watch those fragments become adult humans, with lives and dreams.

When they fall, they will rise.

They remember what you said.

They remember what you did.

You may one day witness the miraculous fragmentation of their own hearts.

You will be joyful.

You will be grateful.

You will forever be concerned.

You will always pray.

And through it all.

From their first breath, until your last.

You'd fight a bear for them.

You'd walk on fire.

You'd offer yourself.

You'd insist.

On your worst days, when it's impossible and destructive and you feel unworthy and unprepared.

Even then. You'd fight that bear forever. **(Author - Shauna Bossert)**

PROTESTING PAYS OFF: SRKW MEASURES REMAIN UNCHANGED

A win for the residents of Port Renfrew!

Congratulations to all who stood up against this NDP-Liberal government. This win is a textbook example of what peaceful and lawful protesting can accomplish. I checked the SRKW website and it looks like the status quo for catch is the same as last year, when it comes to Chinook fishing off Port Renfrew's coast instead of a total moratorium. However, we did not get the shoreline fishery off Nitinat that we asked for. Neil Davis of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) shared updates on the 2024 and 2025 Southern Resident Killer Whale (SRKW) fisheries management measures in regards to other areas: Starting May 1, 2024, the area around the Southern Gulf Islands will be monitored for SRKW presence, leading to fishing closures for salmon harvesters upon the whales' arrival, similar to last year. The government continues to prioritize SRKW protection, working with various stakeholders to establish supportive measures. Full story at www.wwind.ca

Charles Borg, CPC Candidate Applicant for Cowichan Malahat Langford







HAIDA TITLE ACT DEBATE IN THE LEGISLATURE

The Haida Title Act is being debated in the Legislature this week. If passed, it will relinquish British Columbia's ownership and jurisdiction to over 10,000 square kilometres of land and resources on Haida Gwaii.

Haida laws and customs will govern the territory. It will call into question the validity of every tenure ever granted without Haida consent. And contrary to the Premier's claims, the agreement does not protect private property rights either.

It's a big deal. So we should probably talk about it outside of the Legislature too.

The Conservative Party of BC is not alone in sounding the alarm. Tom Isaac, who has written 12 books on aboriginal law and been cited by the Supreme Court of Canada, is warning that the Haida Agreement has ambiguous and conflicting provisions which include a recognition of Haida title over fee simple lands. This could tie the province's hands in the ongoing litigation (the agreement will *not* settle the Haida's court claims) or if the Haida decide to assume control over private lands in the future.

Over the next two years, the Haida's leaders and laws will replace British Columbia's. This will mean roughly *half* the population, who are not Haida members, will be governed by rulers who they do not elect. Nor is it clear to what extent the Charter rights of these British Columbians will be enforceable against the laws and other actions taken by their new government.

Wave goodbye to democracy on Haida Gwaii.

This is precisely what the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) foresees: that all lands previously owned, occupied or otherwise acquired be given to people with indigenous ancestry or compensation paid in lieu. And it is precisely what the NDP is busy implementing across the entire province, aligning BC laws with UNDRIP under the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA), a law the Conservative Party of BC has committed to repealing if elected in October.

Does the dream of UNDRIP look like moral progress to you? Not to me. Not anymore.

As a lawyer, I dedicated the first dozen years of my career helping indigenous clients to achieve these goals. I had the best of intentions, believing as I'm sure the NDP do now, that since indigenous people had lost power in the past the only ethical thing to do was to give it back to them.

But there's a missing variable in this moral arithmetic. Indigenous inhabitants did lose ownership and control of these lands to Great Britain and successor governments. But they and their descendants got something in return.

Keys to the modern world. The wheel, the lightbulb, the microchip. Modern medicine, which has tripled human lifespans from 25 to 75 years. And every right possessed by their fellow British Columbians. How could one ever quantify that? Will they be returned under the Haida Agreement? We cannot turn back the clock. Our history is complex, with leaps forward as well as setbacks. And I understand as well as anybody that there are legal realities we need to face. So let's acknowledge the racist boxes that have historically defined us and ask: Will we dig them deeper? Or will we extract ourselves, gracefully and collaboratively, from those boxes and onto firmer ground?

We must choose. I believe we can have reconciliation now. If we recognize our common humanity. If we refuse to calculate a "balance owing" from our distant past. And if we instead build on the legacy of our mutual trade, cooperation, and empowerment. Let us rise above our racial distinctions and walk as equals on the path to peace, prosperity, and good government.

Tim Thielmann is a BC Conservative Candidate, Lawyer and Father. Tweet (X) April 29th @timthielmann

NORTH COWICHAN'S FOREST FUTURE



Photo: WWIND File Photo

North Cowichan (N.C.) stands out among municipalities due to its ownership of 5000 hectares of forest.

Over the past 30 years, N.C. has successfully managed this forest, generating approximately $1 million annually while allocating approx $500k for maintenance which gives the program a reserve fund. The forestry department also contributed to local fundraisers by donating cords of wood, maintaining the allure of the 'six mountains' as a cherished tourist attraction.

In 2019, a decision was made to cease all logging activities pending a survey and report from UBC consultants. This report explored various options ranging from continuing logging as usual to halting it entirely in favour of utilizing the forest for carbon credits. Despite the high cost of the survey, public engagement was disappointingly low. Nonetheless, the online survey purportedly indicated that the majority favoured option 4 – no logging, opting instead for carbon credits.

Subsequently, the forestry program's budget shifted from surplus to deficit, burdening taxpayers. The reserve at the end of 2023 stood at $230,490, resulting in a $112,000 deficit with projected 2024 expenses far exceeding income. This raises questions about the relevance of taxpayer input, particularly in light of consultations with local First Nations, whose preference for carbon credits could potentially veto logging plans.

Recently it seems the council and N.C. residents will be further halted in their decision over the forest's future as Chief Cindy Daniles of the Quw'ustsun Nation states "After generations of having been excluded from decision making related to our forests, Cowichan Tribes through the Quw'utsun Nation, is in discussion with the Municipality of North Cowichan to develop a co-management framework regarding the Municipal Forest Reserve (MFR). While this work is underway, N.C. will suspend all new decisions or initiatives related to the MFR. Ongoing forest-related work such as fire marsh mitigation, dangerous tree assessment and removals, storm clean up, silviculture activities and invasive plant management will continue as required. Cowichan Tribes, along with other Quw'utsun Nation communities, is looking forward to working more closely with N.C. to take up our stewardship responsibilities, within our ancestral territories."

Furthermore, concerns arise regarding potential conflicts of interest with Cllr. Toporowski's dual roles in both North Cowichan and Cowichan Tribes, particularly as she joins committees like the Natural Resource Committee for the tribes, and her recent nomination to run for the NDP provincially. Residents of North Cowichan are understandably anxious about the implications of such affiliations on decisions concerning the forest reserve's future.

The fate of North Cowichan's forest reserve hangs in the balance, influenced by complex dynamics involving financial viability, Indigenous consultation, and potential conflicts of interest. Residents await clarity on the path forward with a mix of anticipation and apprehension.

BACH FLOWER REMEDIES: NATURAL SOLUTIONS FOR MODERN STRESS

One of the best less-traveled roads I wandered down over the last four years was to learn more about Dr. Edward Bach who was a British doctor, bacteriologist, pathologist, homeopath and a prolific spiritual writer born in 1906. Dr. Bach is best known for developing Bach remedies, a simple selection of 38 flower remedies covering all aspects of human nature and moods that he intuitively derived based on his psychic connections to the plants.

"...those herbs of the field placed for healing, by comforting, by soothing, by relieving our cares, our anxieties, bring us nearer to the Divinity within. And it is that increase of the Divinity within which heals us." — Dr. Edward Bach, M.B., B.S., M.R.C.S., D.P.H

I have known about and used Bach Flower remedies for over 20 years, especially Rescue Remedy®. I always had a desire to dive deeper into his work, so I registered for an online course that included three levels. I learned so much about Dr. Bach's individual healing remedies, and how to use them in everyday life for people, plants, and animals — truly inspiring and uplifting for our troubled world.

In 1928, Dr. Bach began experimenting with medicines made from flowers, as he had always been more interested in the people suffering from the disease than in the diseases themselves; a fact that made him unusual at that time. His work with the flower remedies convinced him that true health could best be maintained by treating the individual personality, instead of concentrating exclusively on the diseases of the body. He discovered that by selecting flower remedies according to the personality and emotional states of the individual he was able to resolve these imbalances — noticing that well-balanced people got better physically because their bodies were quite literally free to heal themselves.



Photo: WWIND File Photo

Dr. Bach developed 38 flower remedies that cover the full spectrum of emotions humans experience in 7 key areas: despondency + despair; overcare for others' welfare; fear; uncertainty; lack of interest in present circumstances; loneliness; and over-sensitivity. Within each category are several remedies that assist in the acceptance and integration of our deep emotions. Each remedy is associated with a basic human emotion ~ Mimulus for example, is for when we are anxious or afraid about something specific or a known fear; taking the Mimulus remedy helps us to overcome our fear and face life with courage. More remedy examples include Elm for overwhelm; Pine for guilt and self-blame, Honeysuckle for living in the past; Holly for anger, Willow for resentment, and Larch for lack of confidence... fascinating!

By the time Dr. Bach left the physical realm in 1936, he had contributed greatly to the natural, self-heal movement, and I am grateful for his insight, intuition and the beautiful healing gifts he left us in his work and writings. Using the remedies myself through the years, and intensively these last intense few months, has given me increased confidence, peace, patience and a growing sense of personal power and well-being.

I love sharing about Dr. Bach's work with my brothers and sisters, as all humans can benefit from these safe, beautiful and simple flower remedies these days, especially Rescue Remedy, my go-to and favourite remedy. Rescue Remedy is used to help you cope with everyday stress, and especially at times of crisis, trauma and emergencies for people and animals. I have carried a spray bottle of this truly remarkable combo remedy in my purse for over 20 years, and I have used it to assist others I have met in my travels as well. The remedy for children and animals is made with sweet and sticky glycerine and contains no alcohol.

I have also witnessed the rich rewards of using the Rescue Remedy® on our large feral cat family -- truly remarkable and calming for the animals. Rescue Remedy® is a combination of five different Bach Flower remedies: Star of Bethlehem for shock; Rock Rose for terror and panic; Clematis for faintness; Impatiens for undue agitation; and Cherry Plum for hysteria or loss of self-control. This remedy is a must-have these days with so much anxiety, depression, trauma and mental health issues. https://www.rescueremedy.com

I welcome you to contact me to discuss how a personal Bach Flower remedy blend can gently and simply help you balance your emotional needs and well-being. A fantastic way to step forward in personal strength renewed peace and real confidence! Be in touch by email at afreshstart@shaw.ca or by phone at 250 597-2102

"The treatment of tomorrow will be essentially to bring four qualities to the patient. First, peace: secondly, hope: thirdly, joy: and fourthly, faith." — Dr. Edward Bach, M.B., B.S., M.R.C.S., D.P.H

Diana Pink is a Registered Bach Flower Remedy Practitioner and an inspired holistic health Mentor, who loves growing and using natural remedies to detox, and restore health and vitality. I welcome you to contact me to discuss how a personal Bach Flower remedy blend can gently and simply help you to balance your emotional needs and well-being. A fantastic way to step forward in personal strength renewed peace and real confidence! Be in touch by email at afreshstart@shaw.ca or by phone at 250 597-2102





Dear WWIND,

Interesting the camouflaged "spin" by the federal "climate change" loonie .Environment Minister Guilbeault. "CANADA EMISSIONS REPORT SHOWS SIGNS OF PROGRESS TOWARD 2030 GOA" Times Colonist - from The Canadian Press by Mia Rabson. May 3/24

The words "greenhouse-gas emissions", used over and over again, INSTEAD of "CO2 emissions" - is deliberate.because CO2 is a harmless beneficial gas required to support life on our planet. "Tones" upon tons of the stuff, going into the air, oh my god, it's sure to fall and hit you on the head!

"Greenhouse Emissions to give the FALSE impression that CO2 is "rising"and forming a "greenhouse layer", high above our planet, and thereby "trapping" warm air generated on earth" and causing global warming - bla, bla, and bla. CO2 cannot "rise" as it is "heavier" than surrounding air. It is "mixed" in with air in the lower atmosphere - where it is NEEDED to support life on earth. When BOTH the CO2 and warm air heats up, BOTH - rise - expand - and cool rapidly. Correct, no greenhouse effect, no trapped warm air by a non existing greenhouse layer high above our planet. Nope, not even cow fart gas, claimed to be more deadly than CO2. HELLO?

Now, let me see, about the tonnage of CO2 going into the air we breathe? . Mother Nature, and her volcanoes have been pumping gazillions of CO2 and other "poisonous" gasses into the atmosphere since time began. Seems to me we aren't choking from the smoke and not dying from the poisonous gasses, are we? With those FACTS in mind, how can anyone deny that Mother Nature has a way of cleansing the air we breathe? What we are choking on is the bullshit being peddled by Guilbeault and his "green" loonies followers, as they continue to destroy the economy of our country.

John Walker. Cobble Hill B.C.

To the Mayor and Council of North Cowichan,

I am writing to express my deep concerns regarding the recent developments surrounding the new RCMP building and parks on Drinkwater/Paddle Rd. Upon inquiry about the park in front of the new RCMP detachment, I received a response from Mark Frame which indicated that "the building is too wide to be set further south". This revelation was shocking and raises serious questions about the adequacy of the planning process for such a major project. This land was purchased in 2014 for three acres for 1 million, plus two additional acres in March 2021 for 1.2 million .

It is incomprehensible that a project of this scale could suffer from such inadequate planning. Additionally, the discrepancy between the initial budget estimates and the final costs is alarming. The project, initially estimated at $23 million, has more than doubled to $48 million, with additional costs for land acquisition. Furthermore, the decision to purchase additional acreage, including a house, raises further questions about the transparency and efficiency of the planning process.

The landscaping of the front yard of the building, purportedly a park, has incurred significant expenses, including $1.4 million for landscaping and irrigation. However, it appears that the planning oversights have resulted in excessive trees, plants, and fencing, necessitating ongoing maintenance. Moreover, the potential inclusion of this park in watering restrictions compounds the wastefulness of this expenditure.

The recent developments regarding the purchase of property for a public park at 2999 Drinkwater Rd further highlight the shortcomings in planning and decision-making. The exorbitant purchase price of $1,415,000 does not even account for the construction or maintenance of the park. This raises concerns about the prioritization of taxpayer funds and the effectiveness of municipal decision-making.

Furthermore, the proposed location of the Central Paddle Park, adjacent to a supportive housing facility and amidst a population struggling with addiction and homelessness, is deeply concerning. The potential for increased crime and public safety risks in the area is evident, and the park may not be a suitable environment for families with children.

Moreover, the traffic and access issues surrounding the new RCMP detachment compound the concerns about its location. The site's proximity to major traffic routes and commercial areas raises questions about safety and accessibility, especially considering the ongoing construction and development in the area.

In conclusion, the excessive spending and poor planning associated with these developments do not serve the best interests of taxpayers, residents, or the community at large. Urgent action is needed to address these concerns and ensure greater accountability and transparency in future municipal projects.

Concerned Citizen, Joyce Behnsen



LOSING ENERGY INDEPENDENCE

As many local citizens increasingly become frustrated with local government's narrow strategies for governing, by putting all policy through a "Climate lens".

It seems that local bureaucrats just double down, and completely ignore any possibility that their hyper-focus could cause harm to their citizens in the long run. Unable to even ask themselves, "Would I still push through these restrictive policies if they turned out to be devastating to the people of our towns?", they continue at mach-level speed, down the road to "Net Zero". By removing choice in heat sources, and advancing plans to remove cars, all before alternative infrastructure is even in place, local governments have shown that they are beholden to a global agenda, as well as to the grant money they depend on that would be removed if they said: "hold on a second, let's slow down here and figure out what is best for our community!" Recently in the House of commons Liberal Minister stated that Canada has not had this low emission count since the "OJ Simpson trial" (1995). If this is the case, then North Cowichan and the CVRD have already hit their targets as their local climate plans state we need to reach target emissions of 2007 Council's goal is to reduce our overall community greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent over 2007 levels by 2050, Executive summary from "A Multi-Polar World at Risk What About Energy Security?

Robert Lyman 4/22/24 - Friends of Science Society

"In the 1970s and 1980s, energy security meant assuring a stable supply of affordable oil and reduced vulnerability to the threat of embargos and price manipulations by exporters. Many of the measures introduced were aimed at reducing oil imports and exports, diversifying the sources of energy (and specifically oil) supply, increasing energy efficiency, establishing strategic oil reserves and imposing controls on the price of oil.

For most of the post-2000 period, the governments of the world have abandoned their energy security concerns as they shifted focus towards attaining the goals of climate policy. Most OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) governments are now voluntarily committed to work towards the so-called "net-zero" emissions goal by 2050.

A new set of security concerns is arising as a result. One of the central features of global efforts to reduce GHG emissions is their reliance on accelerating the production and deployment of five critical technologies: solar photovoltaic (PV) electricity, industrial wind turbines, batteries to store electricity in bulk, electrolyzers for the production of hydrogen, and heat pumps. The International Energy Agency now reports frequently on the trends with respect to these technologies and advocates for policies that will increase their production and use. In 2023, the IEA published an Energy Technology Perspectives (ETP) Special Briefing intended to provide policymakers with "strategic insights" in this area.

Manufacturing operations are highly geographically concentrated: currently, four countries and the European Union account for 80-90% of global manufacturing capacity for the five clean technologies examined in this briefing. China alone accounts for 40-80% of these technologies. If all announced projects were to be realized, these shares would shift to 70-95% and 30-80% respectively.

China also has a major role in the production of some critical minerals that are used in the renewable energy sector and in batteries. It is the dominant player in global mineral processing, and its upstream control over raw commodities is also increasing. It refines 68% of the world's nickel, 40% of the copper, 59% of lithium, and 73% of cobalt. As for minerals, it produces over 60% of the world's vanadium and graphite, and 40% of the world's molybdenum, aluminum, and lead. Rare earth elements over which China has a substantial hold over mining activity include 17 metallic elements, four of which – neodymium, dysprosium, praseodymium, and terbium -are of particular importance to "clean" energy technologies.

This is not an accident. China has achieved this manufacturing and market dominance due to clear and sustained policies and deployment targets in its Five-Year Plans.

China's state-owned and controlled companies are directed by the government (i.e. the Chinese Communist Party) to operate differently than the privately owned and operated firms in most OECD countries. China engages in trade based not solely or even principally on markets but on government protection and mercantilism. Mercantilism is a nationalist economic policy that is designed to maximize exports and minimize imports for an economy. In other words, it seeks to maximize the accumulation of resources within the country and use those resources for one-sided trade. Their objective in trade is often to drive their higher-cost competitors out of business, gain a near monopoly on supply, and then raise prices. They also can serve the broader strategic interests of the Chinese state.

Due to their climate policies, OECD countries are increasing their dependence on a single country for their future energy supplies. The concentration of supply capabilities in one country far exceeds what OPEC had in 1973. China is continually challenging Western countries for geopolitical supremacy, which adds to the risk that it might use its domination of supply capability in future to determine the supply and price conditions unilaterally. In effect, OECD countries are endangering their own people by "Making China great again."





As the Westward Independent slowly makes its way into other communities on the island, we will expand to include stories from these communities, as well as locals who 'council watch' as we do. Here is one of those folks from our neighbour to the north.

PORT SIDE REFLECTIONS



Photo: Town Hall - Charlaine

The Port Alberni town hall (PATH) committee 2024 was pleased with the turnout, especially as they had to compete with a Bulldog's hockey night game against the Canucks.

The Bulldog's are a prominent group in this town, hence, to see 100 people attend the first town hall is a great start to the new informational meetings. All city council, ACRD directors, MLA, MP, First Nations groups were invited to attend with many being asked to RSVP, but alas only one director showed up and only two councillors responded to the RSVP. Is there a lack of public interest with the Council or is the Council just following policies in their rulings? As a North Cowichan elected official once said "If you do not like what we are doing, run for council at the next election."

Town halls are rapidly proliferating throughout British Columbia (BC), spurred by a sense of societal division and frustration. Paul Jordan, the founder of BCTownhall2024.ca, expressed his disillusionment with the state of affairs, recounting how his family and friends turned against him amidst societal discord. Seeking a means to bridge this divide, Jordan was inspired to return to traditional town hall-style gatherings, eschewing social media for face-to-face dialogue.

The impetus for these town halls is fueled by concerns over legislative measures such as Bill-36, enacted in November 2022, which imposes restrictions on healthcare professionals regarding public criticism of government health policies. A pilot town hall in Lake Cowichan gained traction, featuring MLA John Rustad and Dr. Stephen Malthouse, who advocated for public awareness of legislative initiatives with minimal public input.

Organizations like BC Rising and Freedom Rising have joined the movement, leading to a surge in town hall events across BC. These gatherings serve as platforms to educate the public on various legislative proposals, including UNDRIP (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples) and its implications. Speakers like Joshua Lemmens, an Eagle Clan Elder, shed light on UNDRIP's complexities, urging community collaboration to safeguard indigenous lands.

Concerns extend beyond legislative matters to encompass issues like food security, as voiced by Wayne Smith, a local farmer. Smith highlighted the challenges faced by farmers due to stringent regulations and a lack of support for agricultural education. Dr. Stephen Malthouse echoed these sentiments, emphasizing the detrimental impact of Bill 36 on healthcare professionals and patient care.

The growing proliferation of town hall events in BC reflects a grassroots effort to address societal concerns and promote civic engagement. These gatherings serve as forums for dialogue, education, and advocacy, empowering communities to voice their concerns and hold policymakers accountable. In an era marked by division and discontent, town halls offer a beacon of hope for fostering unity and informed decision-making.

By Charlaine, Port Alberni

POOR ATTENDANCE FOR SUCH IMPORTANT EVENTS AT AGM

A mere 26 residents of the almost 800 homes of the Cherry Creek District, attended the April 18, 2024, Annual General Meeting (AGM) at the Cherry Creek Hall.

The Improvement District is nestled beside the City of Port Alberni on the West side of Vancouver Island and has a population of 1,977 people. Financial auditors spoke about the over $800,000 Water and Fire services costs for 2023 that was accepted by everyone. Discussions then were mainly pertaining to the newly proposed water treatment plant that is being designed as Island Health in 2006 adopted the 4-3-2-1 Drinking Water Treatment for Surface Water Policy. A conversion study was done (with final disclosure yet to be detailed) by Dan Huang of Connections Planning Ass. Ltd., detailing the treatment plant costing upwards of $6 million, however, many attendees to the AGM commented that this study was over-pricing the estimates. It was felt that the study was biased so that residents would opt to convert to the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD) which, according to many of the attendees, was why the study was slanted to accept government acceptance.

During the conversion study open house on March 14, 2024, many residents spoke against joining the ACRD as it would negate our sovereignty - most want to keep our independence. The drawback to joining the ACRD is the lack of government grants. The Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) voted to not fund or grant Improvement Districts (which CCWD is) as the municipalities all fight over the available funds and of course there is nothing left for the Improvement Districts, according to past CCWD trustee Ron Crema. "We have a gravity system and full proof - best thing in the world," Crema said. As Wes Kovac, CCWD administrator says "We have the best water on Vancouver Island. Wendy Johnston, who already served a one-year trustee position, won the 3-year term against Lars Bank. Previous years, there were few applicants who went forth to serve on the CCWB, and most were elected by acclamation, but with the new water system being implemented and a new firehall to be constructed - renewed interest is happening and this is good.

It is diffficult to get residents involved in community activities - be it everyone is too busy working so much to keep afloat or Netflix is more important. In any case, the CCWD now has a good board of trustees whom we feel will do just for the ratepayers of this District.

By Charlaine, Port Alberni

NATURE'S SILENCE: THE CONSEQUENCES OF DIVERTED ENVIRONMENTAL EFFORTS



I often find myself contemplating the whereabouts of the Environmentalists of yesteryears, wondering if they've moved on, grown apathetic after enduring numerous defeats despite some victories.

Have they shifted their focus to the climate narrative, an elusive target we're told can be achieved through stringent government regulations, even if it means impoverishing ourselves? It seems that tangible, attainable goals like 'Save The Carmanah Valley' or 'Stop The Shark Fin Soup' have been replaced by a broader, vaguer vision of utopia. Could it be that these activists, once effective in their pursuits, have been steered away from confronting the true perpetrators of environmental degradation, towards a narrative where average families are made to bear the burden, sacrificing their comfort while the true scourges of our earth remain untouched?

It's as though the original Environmentalists have been redirected from targeting major polluters, only to be spun around to blame struggling families with outlandish claims such as "a single-family home is the biggest polluter." This redirection, coupled with the demonization of vital gases like CO2, which have contributed to the greening of our planet over the years, is a stroke of manipulative genius. Steering motivated individuals towards the belief that they alone can alter the climate through their actions is perhaps the most manipulative way to secure compliance with a global 'plan', all while sidestepping the real environmental issues, as the true polluters continue unabated.

Recently, I've been reflecting on Rachel Carson's groundbreaking book, "Silent Spring," a powerful exposé on the dangers of pesticide use, particularly DDT, and its catastrophic effects on the environment and human health. Published in 1962, it sparked a national conversation, leading to significant changes in government policies and regulations. Yet, despite the strides made, the chemical industry persisted, merely shifting to other harmful substances, emboldened by governments turning a blind eye or, as in Canada, outright denying the health risks of chemicals like Glyphosate, a known carcinogen.

My reflections on "Silent Spring" are intertwined with memories of my own home, nestled in the Valley for fifteen years. I recall the bats that used to swoop through my backyard, now absent for years. The chorus of songbirds that once greeted the dawn has dwindled, and even the resident owls seem to have departed. The dragonflies, once abundant, are now scarce, and I've had to resort to hand-pollinating plants due to the dwindling bee population. Even the insects I'm not particularly fond of have noticeably declined.

This decline isn't confined to my backyard; it's a microcosm of a larger crisis. The disappearance of wildlife seems to be a silent epidemic, overshadowed by the relentless focus on climate change. Where are the Environmentalists in the face of the government's widespread chemical spraying in southern B.C. to combat 'invasive foliage'? Why is there no outcry over the indiscriminate use of harmful chemicals, or the devastation wrought by forestry companies spraying deciduous trees, compromising vital fire breaks during forest fires?

Beyond chemical pollutants, there's the overlooked issue of frequency interference. Could the proliferation of technologies like 5G be exacerbating the decline in wildlife? From smart meters to LED lights, these technologies emit frequencies that may disrupt ecosystems. Has anyone considered the impact on bees, essential for our survival?

While we all desire a healthy, green planet, some of us prioritize addressing the immediate threats to our environment over distant agendas that burden ordinary people while exempting corporations and the wealthy. And let's not forget the military-industrial complex, where are the anti-war voices amidst the destruction wrought by warfare, both in terms of lives lost and environmental devastation?

In this moment of what feels like a 'Silent Spring', our focus has been manipulated and diverted. Those who care about the planet's health are often dismissed as 'climate deniers', perpetuating division and silencing dissent. Yet, if we follow the money, we see a stark reality: there are those who profit from environmental degradation at the expense of the masses. It's a sobering realization that exploitation thrives when humanity's innate goodness is exploited.

This should serve as a poignant reminder that our planet's health is at stake, and it's imperative that we reclaim the narrative from those who profit from its destruction.

A. Richards

THE SLOW CREEP TO CENSORSHIP- ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

At the CVRD meeting May 1st, there was discussion about adding a fine of $50k for undefined "extreme" circumstances where people do not report to the altering of their buildings on their land.

They also added more divisions within the CVRD that can impose these fines besides just the Bylaw department, and impose the fines as daily fines. The new fine was created by an outside lawyer according to Rob Harris (Bylaw). COAP Inc. went to speak on this matter and was stopped halfway through, as many reports of harassment by CVRD to the Westward Independent, were somehow deemed false by the Chair.

Excerpts from the speech to the CVRD began: "Hello Chair and Directors. I see a pattern here throughout the region, over and over again - this pattern is one of punishment towards regular folks, just trying to make a life in the Valley. Currently there are more restrictions over people' property than ever before in history. In fact, it would have been preferable to have been ruled over by lords and ladies in the past than by current bureaucrats." "It seems citizens are infantilized by local and senior governments to the extreme these days, behaving as if people in offices know more about, or care more about, the land of the people who own it and tend to it". " I do not see any wording stating that there would be warnings, or dialogue between the landowner and the CVRD before they are slapped with this astronomical fee, and what is the fee based on? Completely unclear. I speak to so many people that have been harassed by the CVRD on their land that they live in fear."

That is when Chair Morrison stopped the speech, with a seemingly semi-aggressive tone, by stating "Excuse me, I am going to ask you to stop. Your language is so close to being over the line, could you please moderate your language? Our staff do NOT harass people, it may be your opinion, but that language is unacceptable". At which time the COAP speaker stated "Well I do interview people so - " and then was allowed to continue speaking.

Further to this speech, another member of the community got up and spoke from his heart about how his situation with the CVRD and his neighbour was "ruining his life", to which he was also asked to not use the phrase - destroying his life, or ruining his life, by Chair Morrison.

Are we looking at what the CVRD's "safe spaces" Bylaws will look like for public engagement? The Westward Independent has in fact interviewed MANY people who describe their interactions with the CVRD and North Cowichan Bylaw officers as harassment, so much so that many stories that have been written in the paper from the mouths of locals had to be placed anonymously as the tellers of these stories feared retribution. There are many interactions that have been really great with Bylaw officers as well, however, that does not mean that others' lived experiences are to be denied and called an "opinion".

Recently another speaker at North Cowichan, known for calmly singing a few lines from songs relevant to the topic at hand, was told their way of expressing their thoughts during public input was 'not appropriate' . The City of Duncan has their comments turned off on their 'scramble crosswalk' post. Canadians can not share news on social media platforms. North Cowichan looks to shorten the public question period. The Mayor of North Cowichan has stated that public input regarding opposition to 'climate' policies would not be regarded, and anyone opposed may just vote in the next election. What are we seeing happening in our communities as people are starting to become more aware and engaged?

Staff

JUNE GARDENING TIPS!

This is such a wonderful time of the year that I find myself waking earlier and earlier just to go outside and check if any plants have new growth or blossoms. Wandering in your garden serenaded by birdsong is a wonderful thing to do!



Photo: Carol Money

Dogwood trees are one of nature's wonders. They flower for an extended period of time and there are several varieties that extend the season from early April until mid-June. I planted a Cornus florida rubra in my garden and this slow-growing small tree has amazing pink flowers that last a long time. Dogwoods don't actually have flowers but rather, like Potentillas, have bracts, which are modified leaves surrounding the flowers, which look a bit like stamens. If you plant a dogwood, make sure it has good air circulation around it and put it in a bed so that the bark on its lower trunk is protected from weed eaters and lawnmowers. Dogwoods enjoy open, loose soil but dislike poorly drained heavy soil. Water thoroughly and deep during dry periods, because if it dries out you will not see those sumptuous blooms next spring.

When your annuals have reached approximately three inches high, pinch out the center growth to encourage your plants to branch out and get bushy. The bushier your plants are, the more blossoms they will have. This includes marigolds, salvia, zinnia, petunias, coleus, snapdragons and many others. All of these annuals will respond beautifully to pinching and will greatly be enhanced by this bit of care when they are young. After you have pinched outgrowth a few times, you will be pleased with the many branches bearing blossoms on them. Also, pinch your Basil plants which will respond with more leaves for use in the kitchen.

Dahlias get nice and bushy with lots of pinching unless you are growing a twelve-inch dinner plate variety for competition! In that case, do not pinch out growth, but rather let all its energy go into one stupendous flower by dis-budding, which is removing extra buds from the plant. Pinch out all side shoots and dis-bud ferociously, leaving only a few flowers per plant. Those blossoms left will be extra large.

Young plants that have been growing inside should be hardened off. Why harden off? Because it is a shock to the plant to be moved from a warm room or greenhouse and put outside where the sun may burn the leaves. By placing them in a sheltered area they will acclimate to nighttime temperatures and harsh sunlight over four or five days. Direct sunlight may burn the leaves if you put them straight into the sun without acclimatizing them first. After five days it is usually safe to plant in the garden, but if it is a very hot sunny day your plant will appreciate some remay placed over it or even an umbrella to protect it.

It's not too late to plant your heat lovers! Starters abound at nurseries and you can get a head start that way but remember to harden them off. Plant your tomatoes in the top few inches of soil on their sides with their stems bent up against a sturdy tall stake. Prune away growth that grows between the stem and the leaf if it is an indeterminate (grows like a vine and yields until frost) but leave all growth if is a determinate (grows into a bush and produces fruit all at once). Put on your to do list to tie tomatoes to its stake once a week. Remember to feed the soil with compost wherever you grow plants so they can produce healthy, strong plants, whether they are flowers or veggies.

The creative lure of planting pots and hanging baskets is now and is the perfect time to get them ready! It is exciting to look at the many plants available and to envision how to create stunning works to welcome friends and neighbours to your home. I love to mix various colours and try new plantings. Look critically at your home's colours. Is your house mostly brown? Bright reds and yellows will make it shine. If your home is dark grey, consider planting various white flowers to brighten it up.

When planting up hanging baskets, go for the largest basket you can find. A fourteen-inch plus basket will have much more room for the various plant's roots to grow into than a ten-inch. A healthy root system supports a healthy plant full of blossoms! Allowing extra room for roots pays off. Use moisture-retaining soil and if you want annual flowers to show up to Thanksgiving weekend use a slow-release fertilizer such as 14-14-14 Nutricote which releases slowly through the season with heat, not water. I like to use as big a pot as possible with many plants in it to get a huge impact. When planting pots, if they are against a wall, put the tallest plants at the back. If it is a pot that you will walk around, plant your tallest in the middle. Work your way around the pot leaving the shortest and trailing plants for the sides.

My entire garden is now planted and it feels so good to see how happy the tomato, squash and cucumber plants are to be outside in the fresh air and sunshine. I have peppers in five-gallon pots and squash plants are sunk into compost hills. Cucumbers are planted along a fence with climbing beans. We are eating butter-crunch lettuce daily and have finished the delicious Bok Choy that was planted in March. I have huge green onion plants from last year that are wonderful in stir-fries. I take big handfuls of chives and chop them fine and keep them in a covered bowl in the fridge where they last well and don't lose their freshness. I find I use more of them when I don't have to run out every time I need them. We have had our first feed of Brokali and are looking forward to more. The Kale from last year that I cut down to six inches are now producing lots of leaves and we are still eating last year's leeks which are so tasty in soups or sauteed as Buttered Leeks!

Happy gardening,

Carol Money

NEIGHBOURHOOD PREPAREDNESS

✓ Know Thyself
✓ Know Thy Neighbour
✓ Know Thy Risk

Need help building your neighbourhood?

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