

## CHAIR'S REPORT for 2017 AGM

### THE FOREST TRUST FOR THE CHILDREN OF CORTES ISLAND

NOVEMBER 23, 2017

#### Introduction

The Board for the Forest Trust for the Children of Cortes Island Society is: Chris Dragseth – Chair, Christine Robinson – Secretary, Andrew Smyth – Treasurer, Ashe Biela – Youth Director, Andy Ellingsen, Sabina Leader-Mense, Adam McKenty, Connie Brill and Norlene Lillico.

Honorary Directors: Anne Mortifee and Donna Bracewell.

#### Background

The Forest Trust for the Children of Cortes Island Society was formed in **2012** to raise funds to purchase and steward the Children's Forest, and to undertake place-based experiential education. In **2013** the FTCCIS directors initiated discussions with Island Timberlands, the current landowner and have been in ongoing communication since then. The organization received CRA charitable status in **May 2014**, and is actively moving forward with fundraising for the land purchase.

#### Past Year's Accomplishments

Our activities since the last AGM (November 2016) can be captured under two broad categories:

- growth of youth programming and
- moving towards the purchase of the Children's Forest.

As noted at our last AGM, we continue the work on expanding the Youth programming. 2017 was a particularly strong year. The monthly walks in the Children's forest continued. There were some very significant events over the past year worth noting.

The annual Bioblitz took place from April 28-30 with seven entomologists from Vancouver Island participating. In support of the Bioblitz, a fund raising supper took place on March 11. These funds supported the travel expenses for the entomologists. At the Bioblitz, we had 33 children and 28 adults supporting our weekend. The weather was a bit of challenge, but everyone seemed to have fun while learning a lot about "bugs and insects". Several community mentors provided valuable mentorship to designated youth during this weekend. There were many lessons learned from this year's event. One specific item that emerged was the support by some of the parents to fully organize meals and camp management. This will require a commitment by parents in the coming months.

The Friday youth program at Linnaea was well attended with over twenty children regularly participating. Again a theatre program was offered. The group participated in the CKTZ Lipsynch show on February 18, which was well received. Additionally, the Theatre group visited schools to spread the message about the Children's Forest. Two presentations took place at Quadra and Campbell River schools on May 30. The presentation was entitled '*Without One, None*' a murder mystery (loosely based on Agatha Christie's '*And Then There Were None*') set at a BioBlitz in the Children's Forest.

The Stream Keeper program “Gently Down the Creek” was offered to the children on May 12. The Forest Trust Board and the Friends of Cortes Island jointly sponsored this initiative.

Under the leadership of Krista Smith, the children participated in art classes, which lead to an impressive art showing at the TOSH on July 28-30 and August 4-6. There was significant community support with many pieces of art purchased in support of the Children's Forest.

The Board took a significant step this past year towards negotiations with Island Timberlands. The Board sought and received permission from IT to conduct assessment work in the Children’s Forest. The first piece of work was obtaining a land valuation. The Board engaged the services of Francis Guthrie to obtain this information. The second piece of work was to contract the services of Econ Consulting to provide a timber valuation. These two pieces of information provided the Board with needed benchmark values that will influence our negotiations with IT. To this end, the Board created a Negotiating Committee (Andy, Andrew and Chris). A meeting of the Negotiations Committee and IT took place on May 17. Ongoing negotiations continue with Island Timberlands. The Board will provide the Community updates as progress occurs.

Similarly noted at our last AGM, fund raising during this past year has been modest. The Board continues to approach individuals for donations. The main challenge continues to be the lack of a negotiated sale price with IT. To-date, potential donors have been reluctant to step forward until the final price has been determined. It is hoped that a successful outcome in negotiations will improve the climate for donors. In the interim, the ongoing program needs still require support through donations.

### **Future Year’s Business**

Each year, the youth programming continues to gain strength and momentum. To ensure sustainability, the Board will be seeking increased support from parents and other community members.

As the Cortes Community is aware, the Community Forest General Partnership is proposing to move their operations into the Carrington Bay area. Our Board has recently approached the Partnership to emphasize the importance of James Creek to the Children’s Forest. We will be pursuing discussions directly with the Partnership to clarify our interests and seek their support.

The Cortes Museum is establishing a permanent exhibit, ‘*Wild Cortes - Woods, Wetlands & Waters*’ at the Linnaea Education Centre, and are looking for partners to support this work. The Board has agreed to support this work and work with the Museum.

The Board will also be looking at opportunities to engage with other Land Trusts. To this end, Sabina recently attended the Land Trust Alliance of British Columbia meeting. Possible partnership opportunities may emerge for our Board to pursue.

Finally, the negotiations with IT will continue and hopefully result in success.

Thank you for your support!

Chris Dragseth, Chair  
Forest Trust for the Children of Cortes Island