

2017 AGM Youth Director Report (FTCCIS) – November 18, 2017

As I go into my 4th year of serving as youth director for The Childrens Forest, I contemplate the journey it has taken me on. This program holds all of my most favorite components. Protecting wild places, hanging out with wild children, and having lots of creative time to splash around and play in. It's not just me either, I have heard from a few of our "senior" youth recently that The Children's Forest has been a central backbone to their childhoods here on Cortes. How lucky are we? From hands on science and biology while trekking through the forest, to the creative arts and theater opportunities, to the public speaking and performances, all intertwined with the lasting friendships and community shared. I always remind the youth, that in the center of our circle stands the forest. It's a powerful core from which we all base from, and it's why the program is so fulfilling and successful.

Last year we worked with about 20+ youth. We made crafts and sold them at the Christmas market. We made concession baked goods too. We walked streams and creeks and kept an eye on the salmon. We performed at the annual spring lip sync, we wrote a play "Without One-None" and toured it on Quadra Island as well as Campbell River. We made art and had a 2 week art show at the Old Schoolhouse Gallery. We threw a dance party at the Gorge Hall as a benefit for the annual Bio-blitz, and we camped out for a few days in Grandmothers Grove and had a blast at the Bio-Blitz. We continue to show up and spend every first Sunday of the month in The Children's Forest. All in all, we had another fabulous year.

Mentorship is what stands out for me this year. Learning from one another, freely giving of our experiences and knowledge is a beautiful part of living on Cortes in general. This year it has been the older youth who have learned to become the mentors. It's not always easy, but they rose to the occasion. Thanks goes out to our older class, who have so patiently stepped up to help include, support, and guide the younger generation. The lip sync performance was a fine example. The diversity of age range on stage was special, with each person standing in their own power, yet supporting each other. It's what a healthy ecosystem looks like.

This program is offered to all youth and has remained free of charge. We keep it very shoe stringed with lots of volunteering to make it possible. Thanks goes out to all the friends of The Childrens Forest for your contributions. Currently we have 20+ youth, age range of 4-16 years of age involved. We gather weekly at Linnaea. The first hour is centered around mixed media art and theater games. The focus is to help support the 9 and unders, and hold a fun space for them to gather and join us. The second hour is for 10 years and older. Presently, we are working on organizing a winter fundraiser and performance, as well on working on a play to take on tour off Island in the spring of 2018. This has been a long time dream of the youth, and they are super excited to take the message of The Children's Forest out into the bigger

world.

Connie Brill is my other hand, or am I hers? We have pulled off many crazy adventures together and I am grateful for such a solid partner. This program is very successful because of what she offers to it. Miss Christine, so stable and steady has been here ever since day 1. Always there to lend a hand and help organize us. Krista Smith has stepped up in a big way this year. always with her 3 little kids in tow. She organized the art show this past summer, which was a huge success. She is always the voice of the younger, and it's been her lovely energy that holds a space and vision for them to join the circle. Norleen Lillico spent time with us last year, lending a hand, helping us with the lip sync project and showing us all some new dance moves. The report wouldn't feel complete without a shout out to Sabina. I dont see her indoors much, I imagine her running wild with the wolves some where free. Sabina's passion and exuberance for the forest is contagious and the youth cherish the opportunities to go tromping through the bush with her.

It's been a pleasure to show up each Friday and look into these bright, shiny, young faces. It's an honor to watch these guys grow. I am filled with hope and inspiration, knowing these are the ones next in line to inherit the earth.

Please mark your calender's and join us:

Saturday, December 16 from 3-5 pm at the Gorge Hall for "The Childrens Forest" fundraiser event. Come meet the youth while they serve you delicious tapas, followed by a performance. There will also be a silent auction. All proceeds go towards the Spring theater tour in 2018.

See you there!

Ashe Biela, Youth Director