Gabriola Commons Co-ordinating Council (CCC)

Notes for Meeting of Oct. 8th, 2014

Present: George Szanto, Kit Szanto, Alison Fitzgerald, Robbie Huston, Bob McKechnie, Sheila Brooke, Stef Marrie, Linda St. Clair, Chloe Straw, Judith Roux, Carlos de Silva, Patrick Roux, Louise Amuir, Dave Chorney, Muriel Wiens, Gloria Filax

Facilitator: Gloria Filax

Recorder: Alison Fitzgerald (CPR Team)

Next CCC Meeting: November 4, 2014, 7:00 pm, The Gabriola Commons

Recorder for Next Meeting: Learning Opportunities Team

Meeting AGENDA

1. Welcome and introductions
2. New items to add
3. 20 minute discussion
4. Team, Project, Group Reports
5. Follow-up from previous meetings (if any)
6. Next meeting date & adjournment

REMINDERS & ACTION Items – will be followed up at next meeting:

1. **ACTION: Trustee team to lead a discussion of how to use $6,000.00 from anonymous donation of $68,000.00. Donor suggested the $6,000.00 be used to cover operating shortfall.**
2. **ACTION: Trustee team to report on suggestion that Trustees consider asking current monthly donors to increase their donation by a small amount making it clear that on one should be obliged to do so.**
3. **ACTION: Trustee team to report that Thank You to John L. for his years of hedge trimming and the August 2014 weekend he devoted to training volunteers who will take over hedge trimming.**

4. **ACTION: Accounting (Deb Ferens?) to record the shift of Events money to be divided between the Communications Team ($500) for ads and articles, Trustees Team ($3000) for operating, and the balance to buy more t-shirts and tents.**
5. **ACTION: LRP require extra time to discuss main issues from July meeting as per John Peirce request for October meeting. Take up at November meeting.**

ADDITIONAL ITEMS – arising from this meeting:

None

Ongoing DISCUSSION TOPICS – for 20 minute discussions:

1. Boundaries – October: CPR – perhaps including something about orienting people to the Commons.
2. Recognizing contributions – November: Trustees
3. Timber Frame building (Sustainability bldg.) – December: LRP (John Peirce) perhaps including the Commons main entry issue and signage.
4. Web site update – January 2015
5. Personal benefit at the Commons – February 2015 spring: Farm Management Team
6. Team Decision Making and the Greater Good at the Commons – March 2015 – Patrick Roux

Introductions

Facilitator Gloria raised a question of process regarding asking questions – is the culture of CCC such that council members raise a hand to signal to the facilitator they have something to say OR council members speak out when they have something to say. Council agreed that members to raise a hand and be acknowledged by the facilitator before speaking. Facilitator/s to track order of speakers so everyone has a turn.

1. 20 Minute Discussion

Muriel Wiens from the CPR team gave a presentation (see pages 6, 7) on *Boundaries*, and mentioned an observation from an anonymous Commoner that there is not much "closeness" at the Commons.

Following is the feedback from the group:

“closeness” happens in small groups

no feeling of belonging? (Linda)

boundaries are an opportunity for engagement (Louise)

there may be hidden power structures/cliques, and those with more influence are longtimers with experience This is human nature (Robbie)

newcomer shows up and is welcomed. Finds it exciting to see a new structure and expects to feel like he belongs if he keeps showing up. Thought the essay was excellent (Dave)

Issue of not avoiding conflict (Muriel)

wants to belong, is organizing events here and is happy with the support, although has been warned by outsiders that consensus is slow (Chloe)

a need to revisit the decision making aspect as one person teams need more involvement (Patrick). Rework wording and add to 20 minute topics list.

2. Team Reports

Trustees:- 1)Two trustee terms have ended, Rebecca Furnell and Jinny Hayes. Two new trustees were nominated at the AGM, Darlene Yuile and Fay Weller.

2) Because of the Trustees legal and financial obligations, smart metres (and the expense of maintaining them) are again a topic of discussion. Judith reported on the grant available from Bulldog Power which must be matched to complete the solar panel installation. Community Works has suggested they could provide matching funds but only if the project includes the installation of smart meters so that excess power produced can go into the grid. The RDN will pay for an energy audit of the Commons. The Council agreed to have Judith carry on discussions with Community Works to see if they would accept conversion of one (not both)of our metres to digital.

3) The Commons has received another anonymous donation of $68,000. $60,000 is earmarked to pay off the mortgage, $6000 may be used for any shortfall in operating expenses. It was agreed we will discuss this at next Council meeting.

Grant writing:- George reported on an application to the Nanaimo Community Foundation for $13, 000 for the septic system

Share the Commons:- Kit reported on the Xmas Alive project, and cooperating with Chloe's Asset Mapping project.

Next meeting, 3rd Wednesday, Oct. 15th, 10:30 am.

Events: Stef reported that the Fall Fair was a big success. She and Becky propose that that the proceeds be divided between the Communications Team ($500) for ads and articles, Trustees Team ($3000) for operating, and the balance to buy more t-shirts and tents.

Long Range Planning:- next meeting is Nov 11th. John Peirce requested additional time at October meeting to discuss main issues resulting from July meeting. Shifted to November meeting because John away October meeting.

Farm Team:- next meeting is Monday, Oct. 20th at 4pm This is a special meeting for re-visioning the mandate of the team.

Infrastructure:- Patrick reported the pond is at its lowest level ever, about 2 feet of depth. But the beavers are back.

The green roof on the Sustainability Centre got started at the Saturday Work-bee, initiated by Robbie and Mary.

Most of the commercial kitchen is finished except for some plumbing and ceiling insulation will go in next Saturday. There is hope that the Health Department will allow us some limited use without the new septic in place.

Bookings:- Robbie reminded us that Mary is retiring from the booking job as of January 1st and we will need a replacement person. Mary has written guidelines for this job.

Learning Opportunities:- Gloria circulated a copy of the invitation to a Learning event jointly hosted with other groups and individuals on island. (See page 8).

3. GROUPS

PHC: Chloe Straw briefed CCC on the Gabriola Community Asset-Mapping Project. (See page 9, 10).

4. ATTACHMENTS:

1. CPR Discussion Paper, Appendix A.
2. Learning Opportunities invitation to community event on learning, Appendix B.
3. PHC brochure on the Gabriola Community Asset-Mapping Project.

I belong to the Commons as a system within a system, both systems being identities. My personal boundaries prevent my being swallowed up by the Commons system, or any other entity. The boundary around your identity is a part of my environment. Even the permeable boundaries of systems have built-in "rules" for what crosses a boundary and what does not. There is a prairie saying, which goes, "good fences make good neighbours". But fences do have gates. Clear, negotiated boundaries are conflict deterrents.

Conflict is avoided in linear, top-down societies by a general agreement to obey authority. We citizens of such societies follow the authority of hierarchies of education or expertise or power. We respect an ephemeral but operating class system, the law, ownership, elected representation, Roberts' Rules of Order, and "ruling bodies" in general. Even though the Commons is a consensually run decision making body, it obeys the laws of Canada by having a legal, unbreachable property boundary between the rest of Gabriola and the Commons, and by electing Commons Board members by vote.

One of the first difficulties experienced by newcomers to the Commons is a confusion over boundaries. Coming out of the "normal" hierarchical power structure, every newcomer has difficulty trying to figure out what the heck is going on, who is in charge, how you get "in", and where you start. They are expecting to move into familiar structures which define who has power, how to have influence, where to apply to contribute or get involved, and which influential people to flirt with or con in order to be important. Despite the intention of the Commons to "belong to the community" it has very real edges, differences, and boundaries, some defined and perceptible, and some not so much, which feel to some newcomers, like "go away messages".

The real boundary, the difference that makes the difference is that, out of the desire to create a "commonality" in reality and not just in name, the first Gabriolan Commoners rejected the hierarchical model of group functioning and decision making. They chose to use Consensus decision making and to create leaderless Teams and a general Council run by consensus. And out of the gargantuan efforts of those who began this venture, has arisen what is truly a different culture, which is palpable to "outsiders" or "beginners". This different "way" is a de facto boundary which has to be negotiated by newcomers.

There is a "sticking point", where, in order to maintain its identity, the Commons' consensual "way" must be the operative rule, while still honouring difference within. So the Commons has a cultural boundary that is real.

The frequent complaint from newcomers about hidden barriers between the rest of Gabriola and the Commons is valid. It's a barrier of culture. People arrive with the dominant culture's expectations, then find no way to work through the very real conflict between the culture "out there" and the one "in here". Some have left in confusion and disappointment and even anger. Recently, there has been a complaint from the larger community of Gabriola about the slowness of the Commons to complete projects proposed by Gabriolans. Crossing the boundary from one culture to another can be challenging. Consensus decision making is a powerful boundary.

Consensus works when we leave behind old habits of pulling rank or ingratiating ourselves with the "leadership", or pushing people to organize by our definition of what is important, or agitating for quick decisions in the name of efficiency, or other forms of bullying.

However, even though great effort has been put into creating a nonheirarchical structure, there may be a need for Commoners to ask ourselves, are some of us are more equal than others? Do we have blind spots? Is there a central clique? How are Board candidates chosen? Why? Should terms on the Board be limited? Is the long range planning Team a new executive body? Is it "bad manners" to ask these questions? If so, why? If Teams don't attend Council, and go rogue, do we really have a Commons-wide consensus? Ignoring conflict blurs the boundary between reality and illusion. Is a difference in outlook a battle to be won, or a boundary to be honoured, or a missing, necessary, piece of reality? Burying or ignoring differences in the hope that people will "get over it" weakens the differentiation between consensual decision making and authoritarianism.

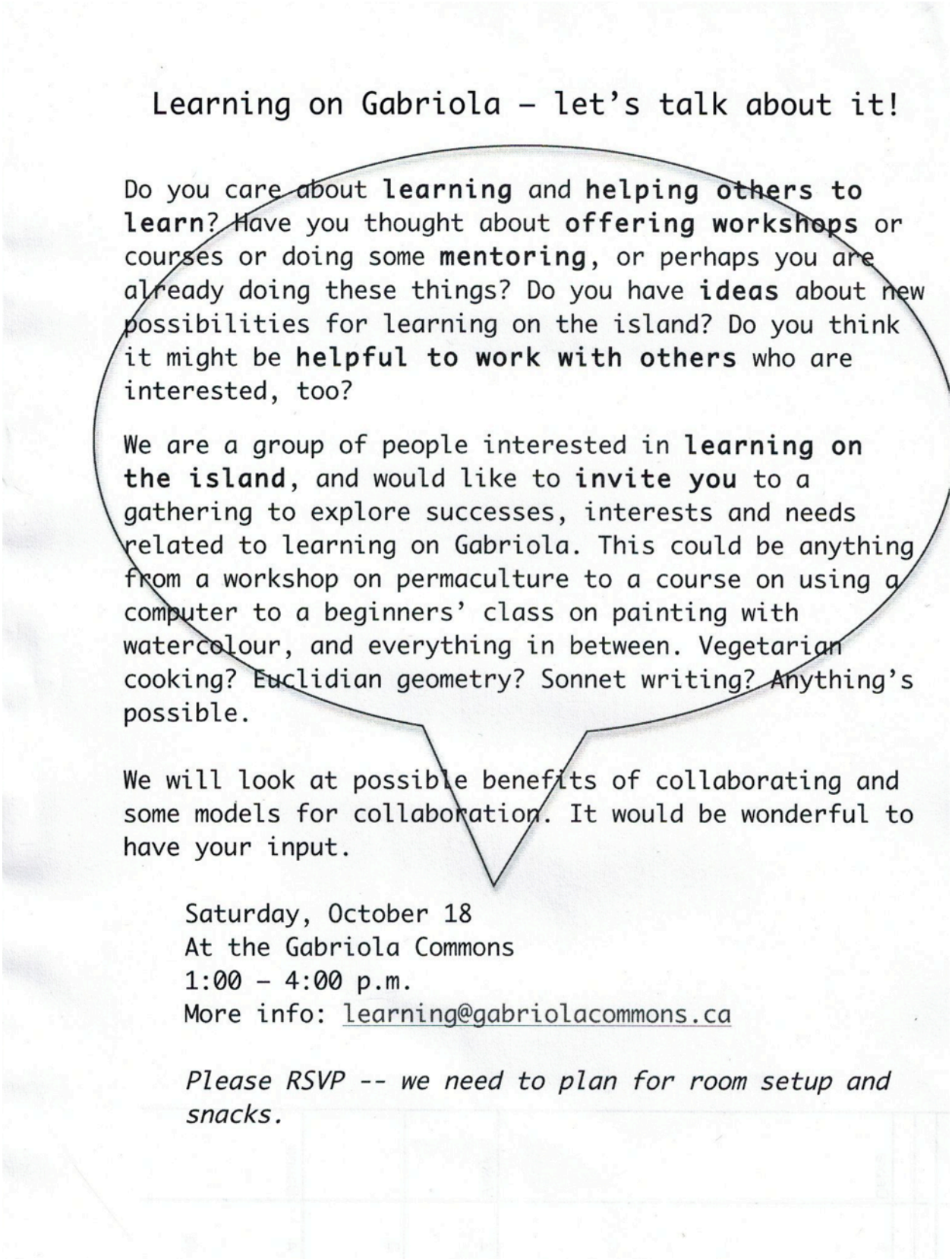
The Commons dilemma is that, since we are not mere subsystems of a genetically evolved consensual system, but are individuals, it takes CONSCIOUS FOCUS to both interact respectfully with others and be true to one's own identity…. If a Commons decision is accompanied by blind acceptance and irresponsibility meant to be left behind in childhood, or private grumbling or gossiping, because people have not had the gumption to protest publicly, has the decision been a consensual one or an authoritarian one?

Paradoxically, a cultural protection of difference prevents conflict. If the difference is great, hopefully it can be resolved through conflict negotiation. And since we are a Commons, not a cult, there MUST be difference.

Indignation or hurt feelings are indications of a conflict. An action may feel "helpful" to the doer, but "invasive" to the recipient, whose feelings are evidence that a boundary has been breached. Or alternatively, I'm annoyed by a person who is a real pain in the rear end! But if that person is not a pain to everyone, maybe I could examine and renegotiate the boundary between myself and that person. Often it takes some enabled self inspection to discover the source of my irritation – why IS it that the other person's behaviour bugs me so much? And, on the other hand, how do I respond, when I've irritated someone and am approached for some kind of resolution?

It's relevant to recognize power as the drug that it is, how pleasant and harmless it feels to those enjoying it, and be alert to its poisonous side effect of resentment. It's tricky to confront it in a community such as the Commons. Clear, negotiated boundaries inoculate the system against power creep.

A possible function for the CPR group is to be a listening presence to help people clarify our boundaries and negotiate a way to honour them. Reality-based consensus and problem solving demand firm individual boundaries. How might we enhance our personal relationships with the land and with one another? This is what many of us seek, newcomers and oldtimers alike.



Learning on Gabriola – let's talk about it!

Do you care about **learning** and **helping others to learn**? Have you thought about **offering workshops** or courses or doing some **mentoring**, or perhaps you are already doing these things? Do you have **ideas** about new possibilities for learning on the island? Do you think it might be **helpful to work with others** who are interested, too?

We are a group of people interested in **learning on the island**, and would like to **invite you** to a gathering to explore successes, interests and needs related to learning on Gabriola. This could be anything from a workshop on permaculture to a course on using a computer to a beginners' class on painting with watercolour, and everything in between. Vegetarian cooking? Euclidian geometry? Sonnet writing? Anything's possible.

We will look at possible benefits of collaborating and some models for collaboration. It would be wonderful to have your input.

Saturday, October 18
At the Gabriola Commons
1:00 – 4:00 p.m.
More info: learning@gabriolacommons.ca

Please RSVP -- we need to plan for room setup and snacks.

Because Gabriola isn't Gabriola without you!

Amazing things happen when we find meaningful ways to contribute our passions, gifts and talents! Get involved in the Community Asset-Mapping Project today:

- Complete the Questionnaire at **assetmapping.phcgabriola.org**
- Volunteer to interview your neighbours and friends
- Join the Asset-Mapping Team to explore and connect with exciting community projects!

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For more information and to get involved, contact the Project Team Leader, Chloë Straw, at **straw.chloe@gmail.com** or call the PHC Community Resource Centre at **250-325-2273**.

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Thank you!!!

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Gabriola Community Asset-Mapping Project

About the Project

Brave Girls photo

Under the leadership of a volunteer Community Asset-Mapping Advisory Team and *People for a Healthy Community*, we will identify, map and celebrate the gifts, strengths, abilities and interests of individuals and organizations on Gabriola. This information will be used to connect people and resources to provide new community programs, engage people of all ages, and explore new opportunities to create paid work on Gabriola.

Throughout the summer and fall, volunteer interviewers will be out connecting with community members. You can also complete the questionnaire online at **assetmapping.phcgabriola.org** or sign up and receive training to be an interviewer yourself! With the information gathered, we will generate a map of all the specialized skills, talents and resources that people and organizations are willing to offer. We will also have a list of the types of workshops, presentations and trainings that people would like to see offered on Gabriola.

Why use Community Asset Mapping?

Community asset mapping is all about strengths and relationships with a focus on local Gabriolan resources rather than off-island (e.g., government) dependencies. We all have talents, skills and gifts, and each time we use them, our community is strengthened.

New relationships and collaborations are the building blocks of the community asset-mapping process. Because of this focus on relationships, the projects and collaborations that come out of asset mapping are resilient and sustainable.

We want to make Gabriola a more resilient, empowered and fun community to live, work and play in and we want to hear from you!