



The Whole Village

Bark



Winter 2017

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10am-4pm
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Check our website
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Farming for Food Justice

By: Jon Gagnon

Community Supported Agriculture programs play a crucial role in connecting farmers with their local community. When someone signs up for a CSA share they are showing a commitment to farmers, the local food system, and the health and vitality of our precious farmland. Whole Village has supported several incarnations of the CSA model over the last decade. Shaws Creek CSA is the newest entity to embark on this partnership. The enterprise is operated as a worker cooperative, meaning the four community members who co-manage it adhere to cooperative values such as egalitarian decision-making and non-hierarchical work structures.

What sets Shaws Creek CSA apart is its core value regarding food access. As member Jen Evans describes it, "Asserting food as a right and distributing it as such is a method to dismantle the idea of food as a commoditized good, to be bought, sold and traded. If we resist the commodification of the necessities of life, we can better guarantee the basic needs of all people being met, which is a foundation for community."

Of course in practice this is much harder to achieve. The realities of our food system and economics of farming make it an honourable

but not always possible aim. However, members of the co-op wanted to do something to address food insecurity and accessibility in the local community in its own small way. They decided to create a crowdsourcing campaign to raise funds so they could offer food shares to the Orangeville Food Bank, Choices Youth Shelter and also offer subsidized shares to some potential members of their CSA who otherwise would not be able to afford the membership price. This was a way to build a community-supported local food program that was accessible to lower income families while navigating the real world, economic reality of our food system, especially in regard to small-scale, mixed, organic produce.

To create the campaign, members of Shaws Creek CSA spent the winter months writing and producing a campaign video then meeting with interested people and organizations to ensure enough funds could be raised to make the program worthwhile for all organizations involved. They also offered their CSA members the opportunity to pay slightly more for a share to ensure someone else in their community would have access to the CSA program, if cost was a limiting factor. It

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The Family Unit



It's not uncommon to get media requests and academics inquiring about your community when you are the lone ecovillage near a dense urban centre. The novelty can be enticing enough, but add the growing interest in sustainability issues and you have a recipe to attract a multitude of interested parties. True to form, Whole Village has participated in many media interviews, student research projects, photo essays and has even been the subject of Master's and PhD theses over the years.

What is uncommon is when the inquiring mind not only keeps in touch with the community, but joins it! Such is the case of Lisa Mychajluk and her husband Marcel Pijper.

For over a decade Lisa has been studying ecovillages and, more broadly, sustainability issues. She recently completed a Master's in adult education and community development with a focus on capacity-building for sustainable communities. Whole Village was Lisa's case study for her Master's thesis at the University of Toronto. She interviewed several of our community members and pored over decades of documents to learn more about our decision-making process, our governance structure and our ability to build capacity toward our collective aims.

After months of ongoing communication with us, Lisa presented her Master's thesis to the community. It was a compelling and holistic look into how our

community organizes itself to build capacity towards our aims, what barriers may be in the way and what strategies could help us overcome some of our structural shortcomings. While her research led her to believe in the importance of ecovillages as grassroots initiatives, it also inspired her personally.

Lisa explains, "It was through my research that my husband and I began to understand just how much 'community' was a vital part of building local resilience in the face of global ecological and economic crises. And of course, we got to know Whole Village much better, and came to see it as the perfect place for us to explore living our dream of a lifestyle that was more connected to the land."

Lisa and Marcel, and their two, children Simon and Evelyn moved to Whole Village in the summer of 2015, having then known Whole Village and many of its members for a few years. Because of the slow, methodical way the relationship developed, they integrated quite seamlessly into the community to the point of being important and well-respected community members within

The Bluebird and the Treehouse

By: Julie Nasmith

Once again this year we offered our two wonderful little cabins to guests from late May to October. One of them, painted blue with a simple design and layout, is called the Bluebird Cabin. The other was built a few years ago as a summer project by Humber College Students. It is a much more elaborate design with a long walkway and a lower deck. We call that one the Treehouse Cabin.

In all we had 42 bookings. Some people came because they were interested in our Ecovillage and some came knowing nothing about Whole Village – they just happened to like the location and the idea of staying on a farm for a day or two. Bookings came through Airbnb as well as by directly contacting us through our B&B email wvbb@wholevillage.org.

This is a typical review from a guest (slightly edited): "This is about more than the amenities; this is an experience, and one you don't want to miss. Whole Village is as an idyllic getaway, and the cabin is fitted with every-



thing you need to settle in before you start adventuring. Trails span as far as the eye can see. Learning about the community and seeing the infrastructure was a delight, and really opened my eyes to a new way of life. If you're looking for a peaceful escape, look no further than the Whole Village B&B. A+" And another, "Hung out, read a book on the raft, great breeze coming across the pond, birds singing, frogs croaking, so peaceful and perfect. I would go back in a second, was just what I was looking for!"

You are most welcome to visit next season! You can check us out on Airbnb where you'll find photos, prices and a calendar so you'll know what's available.

Finding a Carrot that Everyone can Share



By: Stephen Wilson

It was a big day. We were only a few months away from celebrating our 10th anniversary of Greenhaven, our main residential building, and were gathering to revisit and perhaps change our vision and guiding principles. We were hoping to create a new narrative that would motivate and unify roughly 30 people, half of whom had lived at Whole Village for less than 2 years... and then within eighteen months half of those 30 people had left.

What happened? 30 people, maybe 30 versions. There's much at play in a person's decision to leave. For some, Whole Village was not just a home, it was their livelihood, their passion.

Ecovillages are intentional communities with a commitment to ecologically-minded living. They mostly function under a consensus-based, decision-making model guided by a vision, mission and/or guiding principles. As mentioned previously, ours were being re-visited. These documents, not counting some revisions over the last decade or so, had been mostly written in 1999 by people who were no longer a part of Whole Village. At that time Whole Village was a forming ecovillage looking to attract serious, long-term financial and personal support from people. In such a case a certain lack of specifics in a mission statement is understandable, even desirable. There would have likely been goodwill and hope as people came together to share in the creation of such a unique and inspiring project. I believe it is most likely that you don't know the usefulness of guiding documents until they are lived with for a number of years.

Ten years later, a core group feeling a re-visit was needed, and an almost entirely new community of people came together for a weekend of discussions. Eventually we got to specifics and that's when the differences came to the surface; some differences had been bubbling under the surface within the community for years. These differences were most likely amplified with the influx of new members in such a short amount of time. Through group discussions and personal conversations I sensed tension between

members; one such tension was over the purpose of community. Was community a purpose in and of itself, or does the community need a common purpose, something tangible to strive towards. This was an important point of contention.

Maybe it does not seem like a big problem, and a few years ago I would have agreed. But personal experiences and research on the topic have convinced me that a common purpose with a strategic plan creates strong bonds and therefore community. Ecovillage author and researcher Diana Leafe Christian's work on this topic seemed to provide some insight. Christian emphasizes the importance of being clear in your collective aims and ensuring new members can integrate effectively as a part of the group towards your goals.

The idea of community, the idea of belonging and contributing with people you can build a close bond with can sound enticing, and it is. Metaphorically, you can gather together a group of people who are all attracted to the idea of living on a boat. They come together and are thrilled to be sharing this dream with all these like minded people. Then one day, the time comes to chart a course for the boat and a large rift in the community is exposed and it is then clear that they cannot all continue to share that particular boat.

It seems that having a common purpose that is as clear as the carrot dangling in front of the horse. The proverbial carrot helps keep community members engaged. It's the enticing carrot that keeps one motivated when the social aspect of community may be difficult. That's been my experience.

When people are not interested in the same carrot it is more than just a conflict. Such a difference of opinion on a core issue leads to distrust, further fuels disconnection and erodes the sense of community, which some members saw as their core reason for the community.

What to do with that lesson? Find your carrot! Create a plan that best helps you get that carrot, write clear descriptions of that carrot, find people interested in that exact same carrot, continue improving your carrot, and help others find and develop their own carrots. Hungry yet?

Perhaps I should have used a less savory metaphor. One community member refers to it as "a stake in the ground." This is what we do with what we have where we are. Another refers to us as a crew on a boat, setting coordinates based on where we want to be headed. It's been a long process.

So what can we do but continue the work, revisiting and adapting our purpose, and strengthening our collective effort. Use the lessons learned over the last two years continue building frameworks and strategies that motivate and inspire us as a community. Here's to it!

Maple Syrup Makeover

By: Jon Gagnon

One of the most cherished natural features for many community members at Whole Village is our beloved sugar bush. It has significant elevation changes and is a forest of mostly Canadian Maple trees as well as patches of wild ginger and leeks. For several years we tapped the trees using the traditional method of collecting sap in buckets and carrying them to large totes where it would be collected and boiled down by neighbouring homesteader, Jay Mowat. It was exhilarating but exhausting work.

However this year, at Jay's suggestion, a small group of community members installed a more modern line system that streamlined collection and took advantage of our forest's hilly nature.

What is novel about these specific lines is that they have been developed to create the ideal natural vacuum effect so that more sap can be collected. The research, done by the University of Vermont's Proctor Maple Research Center, showed that with the ideal tubing size (3/16 of an inch) and following certain parameters (taps per line, elevation) this new product could increase sap collection with relatively little extra labour.

For us at Whole Village, it turned out to be significantly less labour, since we were transitioning from the bucket system. We were also introduced to another tool that would make the job easy and exciting; drop line tubing pliers. With the help of this tool the group was able to make roughly 250 taps on around 100 trees. Designing the route of the lines so that we had the ideal elevation and taps was also an interesting challenge requiring group discussion and a bit of trial and error.

Luckily for us, the weather in the winter of 2016 was perfect for maple syrup production, but more important, the system worked! Several different members visited the bush at the ideal time of day to check on flow and make sure all lines were functioning. Any clog or broken tap would limit the collection since the vacuum effect would be lost, as we learned after the ice storm in March.

Next year we look forward to tapping the trees again and, most likely, adding a line or two to an untapped portion of the bush once again providing the community with lots of delicious and hyper-local maple syrup. And for the traditionalists, we do still tap and hang buckets on some trees nearer to our residences, which provides a great way to examine daily flow without hiking all the way to our beloved sugar bush.

Farming continued from front page

proved to be a great way to get CSA members engaged in their local food community and get to know what Shaws Creek CSA is really all about.

The campaign, named Farming for Food Justice, was successfully funded by the end of February, meaning they had ample time to crop plan accordingly and ensure they could be as flexible as possible with choosing what to grow. Gord, a volunteer from the local food bank, offered to pick up their weekly shares and the CSA delivered to the local youth shelter.

Shaws Creek CSA hopes to expand the program in 2017 by including more organizations and businesses who want to be an active part of strengthening an accessible local food system. We, as a community, are thrilled that the campaign proved successful and look forward to further creativity and passion from Shaws Creek CSA.

Family continued from the second page

the first few months. Lisa by revisiting and articulating our decision-making process, community development capacity and speaking at conferences about ecovillages and community-based sustainability more broadly. Marcel, an engineer by trade, began tweaking our food system to make it more accessible and accountable, to much fanfare. He also has an interest in permaculture and farming. This past summer he raised chickens for the community and built a solar dehydrator. On top of that he's been instrumental in our bookkeeping, taking over from a member who was leaving.

A truism of ecovillages is the methodical (some would call it slow) pace of decision-making and thus the resulting development. That can be a challenge for many. It's the price we pay to ensure all voices are heard and ideas shared. The feeling of community flow, of group buy-in toward collective goals can sometimes be fleeting, or, at the very least, difficult to achieve. By both observing and doing, listening and sharing, by both re-structuring organizational frameworks and leading land-based projects Lisa and Marcel have been integral to that invaluable feeling in our community. The appreciation has been mutual.



July 16 - 29, 2017

Whole Village
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More
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