

## *Cortes Island (Area I) Regional Director's Report*

This morning with the sun shining brightly I abandoned my toque for a wide-brimmed hat. Before leaving the house for my morning walk I consulted the thermometer. 9 Celsius—confirmed my choice of headgear. Shortly into the walk the unseen force of nature made her presence known. The wind was from the north and my ears began to sting from the brisk air. The walk was invigorating; the mountains sparkled with its fresh mantle of snow, the atmosphere was clear and crisp. This offered a welcome reprise from time spent indoors at my desk and computer.

### *The Ferry Issue*

On February 24, David Hahn, CEO of BC Ferry Services (BCFS), met with members of the Ferry Advisory Committee (FAC). I was the sole representative from Cortes. Regional Director Jim Abram, Bob Brown, Terry Hooper and Michael Stahnke represented Quadra. The meeting was confrontational and long punctuated by the protesters that had waited for Hahn at the Quathiaski Cover Ferry landing. The atmosphere in the meeting room became surreal as they marched outside complete with marching band. Unfortunately, all Hahn agreed to was to enter into consultation with the FACS's to determine how community needs might be reflected in BCFS policy.

I'm sure everyone is aware of the issues but here they are in brief—just in case. BC Ferries wants to replace the discount ferry ticket books with a plastic "Coast Card." Flexibility of use will be greatly diminished and is slated to have an expiration date. The Quadra Deck Shelter has not yet been replaced. In recent emails David Hahn has suggested that a permanent shelter is now being considered but insists it WILL be paid through fare increases. Fares will continue to rise fueled by annual increases, fuel surcharges, and capital improvement expenses. All capital expenses (new terminals, upgrades, deck shelter) incurred in Route Group 6 (all 16 of them) will be spread across the entire route group. Most projects will have a debt lifespan of 20 plus years. Jim Abram has calculated that by 2008 (the end of the first five year performance term) fares will have increased by 52%.

During the entire meeting David Hahn made it very clear that all his actions are outlined by legislation. He repeatedly stated that he is not unable to deal with political issues nor could he provide a political solution. He said it was up to the communities to approach the elected provincial representatives to have the legislation changed.

March 2, 200 people gathered in Victoria to do exactly that. A great round of thanks go out to all those that attended the protest. Minister Falcon refused to speak to our representatives and dismissed all our concerns. His comments to the media and Legislature were uninformed, incorrect, and inappropriate fueling more dissatisfaction. The protest did get lots of media coverage—our message spread across the islands, the province and the country raising awareness of our plight.

The task now is to continually keep the issue alive. If you haven't written letters please take the time to do so. Point out how the constant increases in fares/fuel surcharges are impacting your family, life, and community. Push to have the Coastal Ferry Act repealed and our ferries returned to the Ministry of Transportation and Highways. Choose to sit on the Ferry Advisory Committee—Cortes currently has two vacant positions. (Please contact me if interested!) Lobby businesses and grass roots

groups on other islands. Be ready to partake in other actions. If everyone participates we will have an impressive group for the next trip to Victoria! Remember—THIS IS THE ONE ISSUE THAT AFFECTS EVERY ISLAND RESIDENT. We cannot afford to be complacent or fatalistic.

### ***Beach Access Trails***

During the first week of February over 20 islanders gathered in the Pioneer Room to discuss the prospect of building beach access trails through some of the Ministry of Transportation and Highways (MOTH) undeveloped beach road accesses. The Regional District (RD) will work on behalf of the community and apply for a License of Occupation from MOTH. Once granted trails can be built to RD Park Standards and the RD will assume liability for the trails.

A working committee was formed to investigate various beach access possibilities. They have identified the following locations for possible development: the end of Seascape Road, the new Cove Road dedication next to the ferry landing, Gnat Road in the Squirrel Cove area, Moon Road adjacent to Hollyhock and the end of Hayes Road. Adjacent landowner's are being contacted and all have been supportive of this initiative thus far.

Ray Boogaards—General Manager of Parks viewed the sites on March 13. He was impressed with the beauty of the island and the work the volunteers have done thus far. Each of the sites presents site-specific challenges and difficulties—some greater than others. Ray will be returning this spring to continue working with the community on achieving its goals. I look forward to continued community support as this project proceeds.

### ***Province-Wide Community to Community Forum***

A Community-to-Community forum brings together First Nation and local Government leaders to encourage dialogue and understanding in areas of mutual concern and common responsibility. On March 10, I was one of 240 leaders that gathered in Vancouver for a Community-to-Community Forum titled Moving from Dialogue to Partnership. Throughout the day local governments and First Nations presented active working partnerships sharing their successes in relationship building, economic development, land use planning, servicing and governance.

The first step needed to build these working relationships is the development of mutual trust and respect. Many leaders stated that we must continually make overtures of goodwill to each other's communities—to continually take small steps. These relationships are built not only through actions of community leaders but also through the efforts of all its citizens. Communities most successful share their special occasions with each other.

The development of a Protocol of Respect/Memorandum of Understanding between the First Nation and Local Government is the first step in formalizing a partnership. Equally of all, quality of service to all, and fiscal responsibility (acknowledgement that there is a bottom line) are the governing principals of such partnerships. The results are certainty, stability, and sustainability. We must all recognize that cooperation builds trust; understand that collaborative actions contribute to

the health and well-being of all communities; and accept that building such a relationship will be challenging.

It was pointed out that treaties would outline how we will manage and how we will live. They will not be changeable—therefore we need to take time to get it right. Further it is recognized that once treaties are settled the federal and provincial governments will move on but the local relationship and friendship will stand over time.

### ***Grant-In-Aid***

This fund is gathered via land taxes and is available to any non-profit community organization, where the grant will benefit the general community. Payments of a grant-in-aid are usually issued after August 1, after the Regional District receives taxation funds from the Provincial Government.

Since December I have received seven requests for Grant-in-Aid funding. I encourage any community organization that is considering applying to do so ASAP. I would like to consider all the requests together to so I can allocate these very limited funds as fairly as possible. Hesitation in applying may mean that the funds will be spent—so don't procrastinate!

This afternoon I had time to make a quick tour of the flower garden. The primrose continues in full bloom. Yellow and purple crocus dance in the sun. Early red tulips stand at attention. The splash of color is welcome as is the promise of the daffodils and tulips stretching forth after winter's rest. I hope everyone stops, at least for a moment, the business of life to appreciate these simple pleasures of life.

Feel free to contact me at 935-6488 Monday through Friday 9:00 am to 4 pm. If you get the answering machine try my cell phone -- 202-6488. You can also email me at [brijen@oberon.ark.com](mailto:brijen@oberon.ark.com) anytime.

Cheers  
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