O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE

Visitor's Guide and Information Handbook



How to use this Visitors Guide and Information Handbook

If you are interested in what we are doing at O.U.R. Ecovillage and the structure and history of O.U.R. Organization:

Read Sections 1 and 6

If you are interested in coming to visit us, for a tour, meal or an overnight stay in one of our lovely accommodation options:

Read Sections 1 and 2

If you are interested in coming and joining O.U.R Community as a resident, volunteer, intern or member of staff:

Read Sections 1, 2 and 3

In addition, if you are coming to volunteer:

Read section 4

And, if you are joining us as an Intern:

Read Section 5

If you are interested in joining this community as a Hearthkeeper or Member of our Coop, then we recommend you read **all of the information** contained within these pages and then come and join us on site to meet O.U.R. wonderful community.

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Introduction to O.U.R. Ecovillage

O.U.R. VISION AND MISSION

VISION: Sustainable well-being for the land, ourselves, and our worldwide village

MISSION: To educate, inspire and transform by co-creating a thriving learning community and permaculture demonstration site

Intercultural, Intergenerational, Interfaith and Interdependent

O.U.R. (One United Resource) ECOVILLAGE is a sustainable learning Centre and demonstration site which focuses on ecological ways of living involving Permaculture* design. We are dedicated to researching and modeling ways that are rooted in social, cultural, spiritual, economic and ecological well-being. As well, we actively create partnerships with groups and organizations that are interested in living in community and living lightly on the earth.

O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE is a sacred space where permanent residents and short-term visitors co-create sustainable community. We offer a protected green space and a healthy, supportive environment where we work to contribute locally and globally - in return we live, love, cry, laugh, grow and learn together as an intentional learning community. We are interdependent, viable and prosperous through our deep connection to ourselves, each other and the earth.

For more information about the history, development, organization and governance of O.U.R. Ecovillage please refer to the Information Handbook section of this guide.

*"Permaculture is the conscious design and maintenance of agriculturally productive systems which have the diversity, stability, and resilience of natural ecosystems. It is the harmonious integration of the landscape with people providing their food, energy, shelter and other material and non-material needs in a sustainable way." Graham Bell, The Permaculture Way.

O.U.R. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

One of our residents writes: "Truly it is auspicious to find this place and time together to create what we need most in our lives. To go the full mile together in this space (and beyond) requires a personal commitment to awareness."

To support this commitment and to help us to realize our needs over the long term we have identified a number of guidelines that serve as points of reflection and reference from which to model our communication and actions.

• **Responsibility** – In all situations we intend to take responsibility for our own feelings. Ultimately, no one can make us feel. If we feel badly we take credit for that. If we feel good, we take credit for that too. Our words and actions may trigger and impact others, however, we take responsibility for using them in a way that doesn't manipulate or hurt others.

• **Openness** – Besides death and taxes, there are few absolutes in this world. Various ways exist to interpret and work with a situation. When we actively let go of our fixed beliefs about ourselves, others or the world, we are more open to the "truth" as communicated through our experience and the experience of others in the group. From this place anything is possible. We strive to remain open to negotiate, communicate and dance in all situations.

• **Respect** – Respect is a two-way street. When we act with respect, we strengthen each other. This means we are conscious about not charging into people's mental or physical space without permission. Respect also means leaving the physical environment (land and dwellings) in the same or better condition than you found it, so all may enjoy.

• **Mutuality** – It's give and take, baby! The more we give, the more we are open to receiving. It's as simple as that.

• **Honesty** – Just be real. If you are happy, be happy, if you are sad, be sad. Through honesty we develop a deep trust in ourselves, which we can use to help others be honest.

• **Fun** – Fun and humour keep things light and flexible so we can go beyond negativity. In fun environments we can relax, appreciate our lives together and learn from our experience. No matter what, we make time for fun in our lives.

O.U.R. COVENANT FOR THE EARTH

O.U.R Statement of Sustainability

1. Ecology of Living
Integrate labour, community contribution, personal maintenance and creative endeavours.

2. Community Living
Live in a supportive, cooperative setting with people of like intent. Work toward a common path and live a deep commitment to self, others and the earth.

3. Voluntary Simplicity
Enhance quality of life by consuming less and living simply. Encourage ourselves to receive daily nourishment from renewable, preferably organic, green plants.

4. Right Livelihood
Know the social and environmental impact of our work. Work or volunteer in only those efforts that enhance the quality of all life.

5. Environmental Action
Practice nonviolent action in defense of the Earth. Know the facts and implications of an action and 'stay the path'.

6. Spiritual Practices
Perform a daily practice that encourages attunement with those encompassing powers that nourish the Earth and intuitively guide all human endeavours.

7. Scientific Understanding
Know the basic universal laws of ecology and apply them to a specific bioregion and be able to extend such understanding to others.

8. Cultural Diversity
Study past and present cultures who live in harmony with the Earth. Know the psychological, sociological and cultural roots of one's own tradition.

9. Education of the Citizenry
Use every action, insight and interaction to share environmental awareness and understandings. Be a model world citizen. Spend time with children, elders and people of all ages and abilities.

10. Personal Growth
"Know thyself" with and through the universe. Search, find and accept a path of insight and action that will assure peace, love and truth for all life.

Visiting O.U.R. Ecovillage

VISITORS INFORMATION

O.U.R ECOVILLAGE is situated 45 minutes north of Victoria, near Shawnigan Lake on Vancouver Island at **1565, Baldy Mountain Rd**. We welcome visitors and ask that you please call ahead on **250 743 3067** to arrange a time to visit and take a self-guided tour, or register on our website to join one of our regularly scheduled tours.
Work parties occur from time to time and we appreciate your volunteer help on projects. Please call or email ahead to confirm O.U.R schedule and see how you might be able to help.

Meal and Accommodation Facilities

For those who are interested in staying in O.U.R. community we offer camping, an eco-guesthouse and healing sanctuary with self-facilitated breakfast, and all meals – family rates may apply. The current prices and details are available on OUR website (http://www.ourecovillage.org) or by calling our office 250 743 3067. Please ensure you are expected and reserve your place for meals and accommodation.

Families

Children are a welcome part of O.U.R ECOVILLAGE but we ask that parents/guardians take full responsibility and supervision for their kids while on site. The building sites, woodworking shop, and gardens are potentially dangerous areas and children must have adult supervision at all times in these areas.

Liability

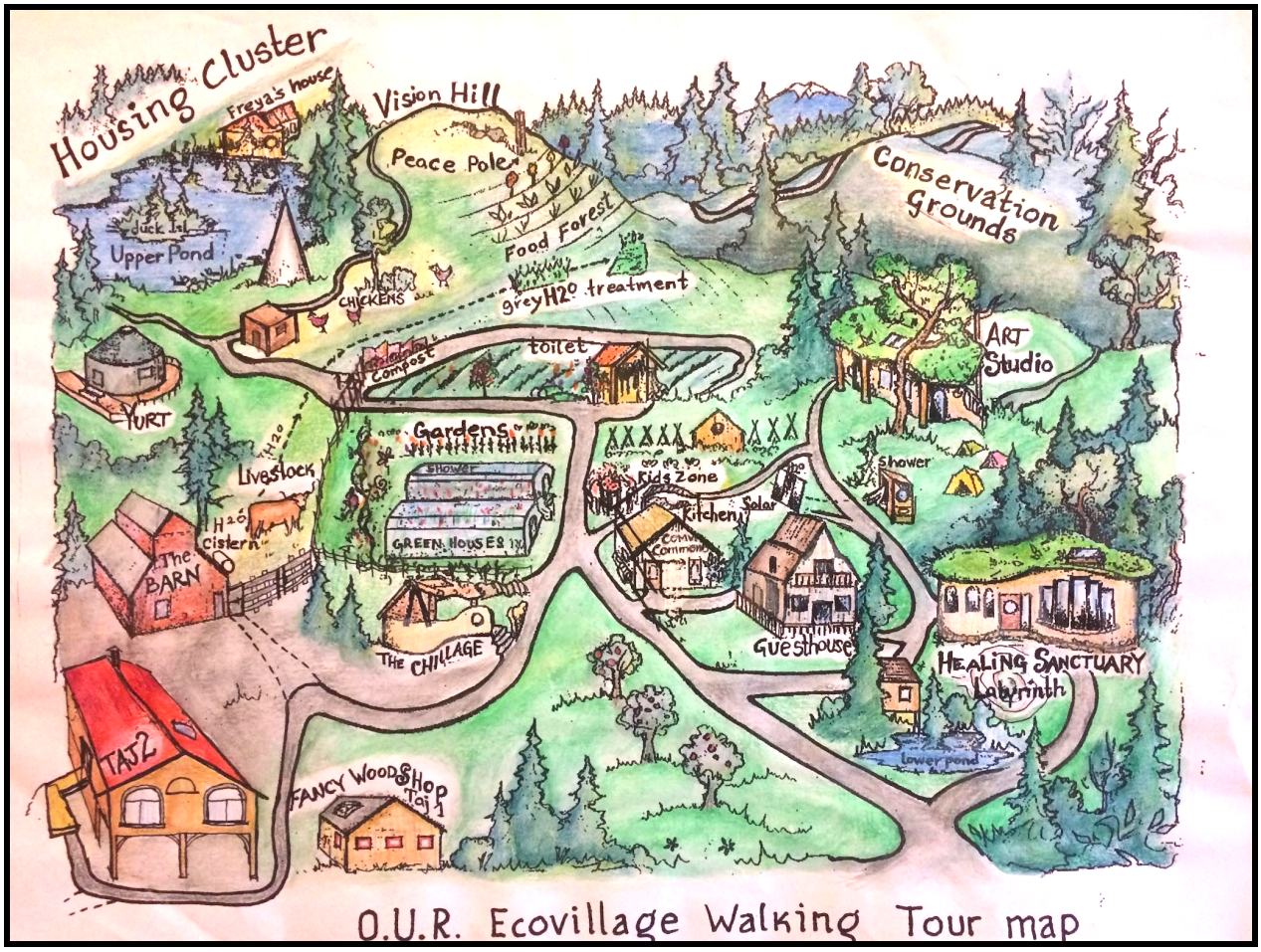
All visitors must sign a liability and media release when they join us on-site. It is really important that any site-related injuries are immediately reported, regardless of severity, to a member of staff.

Pets

Please do not bring any pets onsite.

If you are interested in supporting O.U.R. Ecovillage as a resident, member of staff, intern or volunteer then please refer to Section 3 of this guide for more information.

SITE MAP



O.U.R. Ecovillage Walking Tour map

O.U.R. EATERS' MANIFESTO

O.U.R. Vision is to joyfully share food as medicine for O.U.R.selves, O.U.R. land and for O.U.R. broader world's socioeconomic, ecological and political systems. O.U.R. core approach works toward collaborative respect with all of O.U.R. living companions: animals, plants, micro-organisms and of course humans.

We try to keep O.U.R. food affordable, accessible and healthy. O.U.R. ideal is to eat organic and GMO-free. O.U.R. ability to do this is limited by the cost.
We strive towards eating a nourishing diet of natural, whole foods, prepared for maximal enjoyment and appropriate nutrition, inspired by traditional cooking wisdom. We aim to use carefully prepared whole grains over refined carbohydrates, and include unrefined fats and wholesome sweeteners in moderation.

We work to grow O.U.R. own organic foods in line with traditional and contemporary wisdom, towards regeneration of the land and wholesome nourishment of O.U.R.selves as Eaters. We do O.U.R. best to support small-scale, local and organic food systems when we are unable to provide for O.U.R. needs on this land.

We trust mixed farming (which includes raising plants and animals for food) to be a sound way of keeping O.U.R. land and O.U.R.selves both productive and vital, and continue to deepen O.U.R. skills and understanding of how to best do this.

We honour the role that plant-based eating plays within the multi-faceted spectrum of personal and planetary healing. We prepare and offer primarily plant-based food options to our guests. In line with O.U.R. guiding vision, we also give thanks for some compassionately-raised animal foods in O.U.R. meals. We value collective eating as a community building practice, an antidote to many of O.U.R. world's ills. We respect each Eater's choice in selecting what is appropriate for her/himself from amidst O.U.R. food offerings.

While we aim to accommodate O.U.R. guests' needs, we are not yet able to cater to complex individual food requirements nor severe allergies. However, O.U.R. guests may store small quantities of food to meet their specific needs. Vegan and Raw Food Eaters, while respected and warmly welcomed, may not always be satisfied with O.U.R. food offerings. **Please let us know in advance**

about your needs and preferences so that we might consider them. Together, we are still learning how to do all of these things. We welcome constructive feedback, and appreciate your respect for O.U.R. ongoing process.

In line with the practice of holistic medicine, we welcome the experiences of personal and collective discomfort (often known as a 'healing response') that accompany the shifts away from unwholesome food relationships.

We are all Eaters; we are all Eaten. May we all be well.

MEAL RESERVATIONS

If you wish to dine at O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE and enjoy our delicious, locally sourced and conscious meals we ask that you please **book in advance** notifying us of any dietary requirements you may have. Please note that in the winter months we may have a reduced service in our EATERY.

Meal costs can be obtained by calling O.U.R. Ecovillage on **250 743 3067** and a member of O.U.R. team will be able to assist you with your booking. **you can pay for meals online, at OUR office, or at times even right at the Eatery.

We are also able to cater for larger groups and special events so please get in touch if this is of interest.

We look forward to sharing a meal with you!

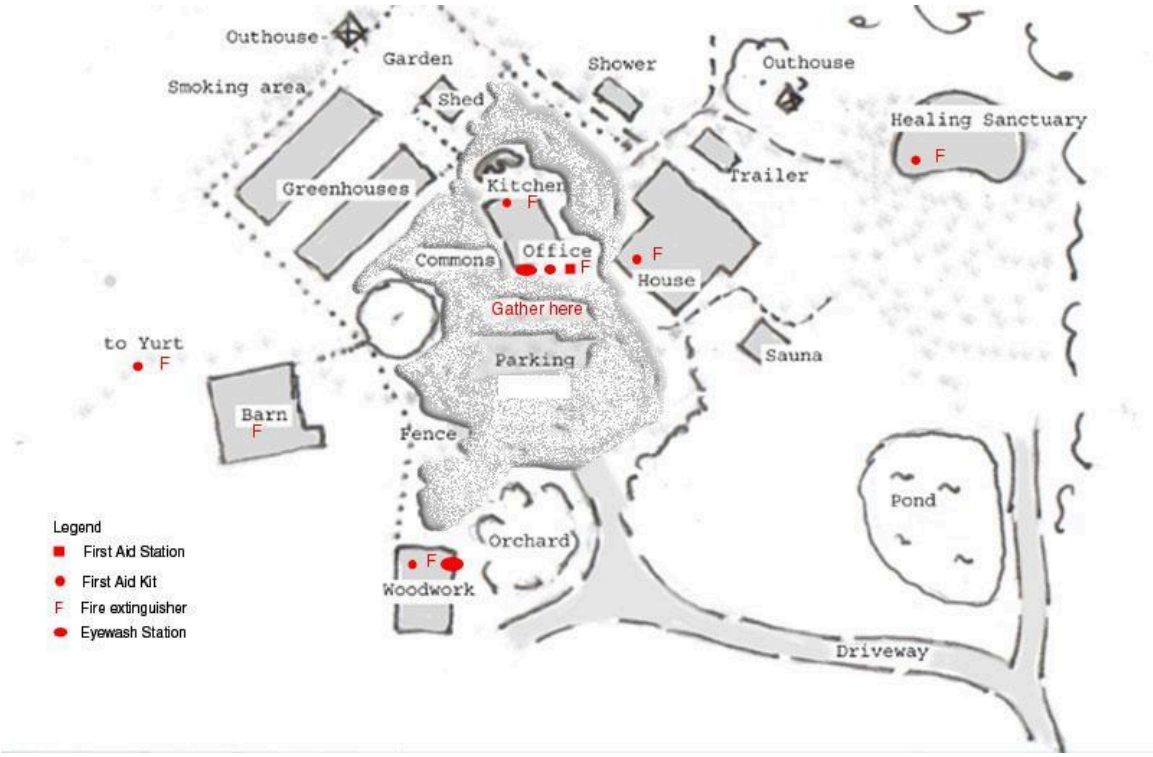
Drug, Alcohol and Tobacco Policy

O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE is a high visibility demonstration space; we also support folks to be fully present to themselves and to all other relationships. **We therefore do not allow illegal drugs or their use, or even storage, on O.U.R. Property.**

Tobacco use is allowed in designated areas, which will be shown to you during a tour of the property. If you are unsure, please ask.

Alcohol use is permitted on site only after work hours. It is not permitted during working hours and can be grounds for dismissal from the any of our programs.

SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES



Please familiarize yourself with the above Safety and Emergencies Map.

First Aid / Medical Emergencies

• Make sure you know who on site is trained in First Aid (designated First Aid person(s).

• If an emergency occurs, go directly and immediately to the First Aid personnel, and report the situation.

• Please standby to assist the First Aider as directed. You may be required to phone 911, for an ambulance.

Fire

• In the case of a small fire, go to the closest fire extinguisher, and extinguish the flame.

• If the fire is too large to be dealt with by the equipment at O. U. R. ECOVILLAGE, then call the fire department – dial 911.

• Immediately report any incident to O.U.R Ecovillage staff/residents.

• Gathering point is the open area between O.U.R Zero Mile Eatery and the barn (see map).

Earthquake

• Stay away from windows. If you are in a building, remain there for the duration of the earthquake. Duck & cover: squat on the ground quickly (ideally under a table or desk for added protection).

• Move away from top-heavy furnishings, bookcases and other things that could fall on you.

• Move under a desk, table or other piece of heavy furniture and hold on to it. If it moves about, move with it.

• If your knees are on the ground & spread apart you are less likely to be knocked over by the movement of the ground. Bend at the waist.

• Place your eyes into the crook of your arm for added protection and use your other hand to protect the back of your neck and head as much as possible.

• If you are unable to get under a piece of furniture, flatten yourself against a wall in the interior of the building, and protect your head as best as you can.

• If you are outdoors, move to an open area, away from buildings, power poles, and brick or block walls that could collapse.

After an Earthquake

• Try to remain calm, and be ready for more shaking. Aftershocks often follow the first tremor.

• Meet in the designated area (as outlined on the previous emergency procedures and safety map).

• Check with everyone on site for injuries, taking the necessary steps to give/get help to those who need it.

LIVING AT O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE

LIVING AT O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE

O.U.R. Ecovillage would not exist without O.U.R. Community. Every year we welcome hundreds of volunteers, interns, new residents and members of staff to join us in experiencing life in an intentional community. We invite you to contribute your valuable time and energy to enable us to continue to develop this unique site, innovate, create and serve the world around us.

Our philosophy is one of service and we invite you to step out of the systems and paradigms that you are used to and experience something new during your time here. In this type of intentional community, life and work are inseparable and you can expect to get out of the community what you put in. It is not always easy with lots of projects going on simultaneously often involving physical work outdoors in all weathers. Work at O.U.R. is an invitation to examine the possibility of a source of deep satisfaction in what you do that nourishes the sense of purpose in your life.

Through taking a role in O.U.R. Community you can expect to learn a huge amount about yourself and how to live more harmoniously with the world around you with the support of a diverse community who know how to balance work and play.

We welcome people from all walks of life and hugely value diversity and we invite you to consider **"Not what the community can do for you, but what you can do for the community."** Your skills, experience, culture and values are likely to be opportunities for growth and learning within the community and we ask you to come willing to share these with us.

We'd love to hear from you if you think you would be a great fit for O.U.R. team so if you are excited about what you hear please get in touch!

DAILY ROUTINE

Since we model community-based living, it is expected that routines must be implemented to ensure the safe and effective processes of O.U.R. Ecovillage. Everyone staying at O.U.R. Ecovillage acts as a contributing member and has a responsibility to work as a team and care about the upkeep here. We reside in a community that is principled upon communication and sharing.

Every week, we have community meetings where the entire community will come together and participate. Here we discuss what scheduling we have in the week and what other events may be coming up. Since we have many members living/working/volunteering at O.U.R. Ecovillage, we also have a lot of upkeep that needs to be done. This includes general clean-up after meals and clean-up of hygienic spaces (compostable toilets and solar energy showers). We divvy up the **care schedule** during community meetings and ensure that work is distributed fairly. Everyone that is at O.U.R. Ecovillage provides responsibility and reliability for their assigned task for the week. Since we participate in community-based living, we also believe in helping one another to ensure tasks are done quickly and effectively.

A typical day would start off with a serve-your-own breakfast served between 7.30am – 8.30am. A variety of foods are available for breakfast. A morning meeting takes place at 8.30am with all community members checking in (how they are feeling/highlights of previous day/what they are looking forward to) and logistics and programming are discussed for the upcoming day. The community then break into teams and get started on tasks, usually delegated by each team's leader. Lunch is served usually at 12.30pm. We have a horn to signal when to come in for meals or emergencies. The horn is blown once 15 minutes before lunch is served and twice when the meal is ready (the same at dinner). Before we eat lunch or dinner, we gather in a **Gratitude Circle**. A gratitude circle is where we touch base with something each community member feels grateful for and provides an opportunity to learn names of all of our guests here at O.U.R. Ecovillage. We eat meals either outside on picnic benches or inside the **Eatery** when the weather is not as nice. After lunch we break into our teams again for the afternoon. A typical day finishes around 5pm. We all gather for dinner around 6pm, starting with another gratitude circle. Meals vary depending on the time of year and are nutritious and delicious. We use many ingredients grown on-site and the rest are purchased from organic farmers in the area. We pride ourselves in having low-impact food purchases. After dinner, we might co-create some type of entertainment (*e.g.,* movie night, board games night, singing around the campfire) or free-time to relax.

COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION HOURS

In addition to the formal workweek and your agreed hours we ask for residents, paid continuing interns and resident volunteers to contribute an additional 10 hours in service to the wider community.

People paying for curriculum and non-resident staff are not expected to contribute these hours. Children under the age of 18 who are living in the community are encouraged to participate but not required to.

These hours could include:

- Supporting other teams (with agreement from your team lead)
- Sharing your skills and experience with the community by creating space for sharing/workshops (submit proposal for how you would like to contribute to your team lead)
- Representing O.U.R. at planned off-site community events
- Supporting events at O.U.R. Ecovillage (parking, set-up, tours, hospitality, cleaning, programming)
- Driving for site and event needs (gas money by prior arrangement)

The Community Contribution is our playground for practicing and creating a culture of service in line with O.U.R. vision of sustainable global well-being. It is an opportunity to give a little extra to support the building of O.U.R. shared vision and enhance community connection. It is about the spirit of "how can I help" outside of the working day to support other members of the team and the overall village tasks. Ultimately community contribution is a way of 'being' that serves the whole community.

Intention of the Community Contribution

- Get stuff done! (To support the quality of life we all benefit from here.)
- Support a democratic and fair culture of participation for all, including children.
- To create an opportunity to bring people into the dynamics of team and community work and 'the how' of making it work.
- To practice and demonstrate how we work through conflict and live with diversity.
- Recognize and learn from our own and others' work styles.
- Support connection outside the roles associated with jobs.
- Understand and support the culture of hospitality at O.U.R. Ecovillage. No single person is the face of O.U.R. - we can all offer relationship.

Completion of your designated tasks as part of the **care schedule**, attendance of council meetings or training programs, personal care and cleaning personal space and childcare are not considered community contributions.

This policy relies on us each of us holding ourselves and each other accountable as a community. You are invited to engage in the communication and deeper relationship that this will require. If there is a sense that someone is not committed to upholding the values that unite us and is benefitting in an unbalanced way, we would encourage dialogue and communication to resolve this – see the resolving challenges policy.

If you would like to discuss the impact of Community Contribution on your role and your time in the community, then please speak to your team lead or program facilitator.

Tracking Hours

Both paid and volunteer hours (including community contribution) are carefully tracked so we can see the real time cost to create and sustain a community like O.U.R. Ecovillage. This information is hugely valuable as we develop new frameworks for creating a sustainable society and report costs and value to O.U.R. funders.

We ask that hours are accurately recorded on fortnightly timesheets and these must be handed into and signed by your team leader on the 15th and 30th day of the month.

Resolving Challenges

If at any time you might be experiencing an issue or challenge with another person or situation at O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE we ask that you follow the steps outlined in O.U.R. Conflict Resolution Policy to reach a resolution.

In the spirit of community building - resolving challenges DOES NOT mean:

- Talking about someone to another person (the first step is to bring it to where you have the challenge).
- Talking about others you encounter at O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE in derogatory or

negative manner on or off-site.

▪ Gossiping in any way.

▪ Blaming or judging others.

In the spirit of community building – resolving challenges DOES often mean:

▪ Even if you have a challenge with someone that you are able to "hold them in positive regard' and look at your behaviour/choices in a situation to see how it is contributing to the challenge.

▪ Receive support from others in the learning community about how you might move through your challenge.

Conflict Resolution Policy

Should conflict arise the following guidelines apply:

A) First, it is important that an attempt be made to resolve the conflict directly with the person involved. We ask that you do not discuss the situation with all others in the community until you have addressed it directly with the person(s) related.

B) If this is not successful, you can contact the HR Coordinator or your Team Leader. They can simply act as a support person, or can directly mediate between the parties.

C) In the event that a conflict cannot be resolved even with the help of your Team Leader, the Programs Coordinator will be advised. If necessary the Programs Coordinator will request written submissions from all parties, and will provide a written decision. If the Programs Coordinator cannot satisfactorily provide a resolution, or if the complaint involves the Coordinator, the issue is to be presented in writing to the OCA Board for resolution.

Visitor Policy for Long Term Residents/Interns/Volunteers

We welcome visitors of our long term residents, interns and volunteers to O.U.R. Ecovillage to support our culture of co-creation and invite them to join us as a guest of O.U.R. community. We ask that all visitors support O.U.R. vision and adhere to the policies in place on this land.

Each long term (for 9 months+) committed resident/volunteer/intern whose stay exceeds 4 weeks has 1 free night per month within their own space or camping (additional nights are $10/pp site fee per night). These cannot be banked and

traded and this does not cover food costs.

In addition, long term volunteers may host family, close friends or intimate partners coming specifically to visit them and who wouldn't come otherwise in their personal living space, or camping at a special rate/night for adults and children. Please note that this does not cover food costs. The below restrictions apply:

Long-Term Residents (living committed to living onsite for longer than 9 months):
Interns/long term volunteers (in programs of 4-36 weeks):

Visitors who are not visiting specifically a resident would be considered as a regular visitor and would need to cover costs accordingly at the general rate. Visitors exceeding these time frames will also be required to complete a resident and role agreement.

The person being visited is responsible to ensure:

- the visitor signs a waiver when arriving on site.
- the visitor behaves in an appropriate manner while at O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE. This includes ensuring that children are supervised at all times, giving feedback to friends if required, ensuring the site policies mentioned in this document are respected, recycling is rinsed, etc.
- all fees are paid promptly
- any damage to property of any individual or organization at O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE is ultimately the responsibility of the person being visited.
- the visitor is educated about and invited to participate in O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE culture and activities. This includes introducing them to the Handbook, inviting them to council (if appropriate) and helping them adapt to village life at O.U.R.

O.U.R Friends
Volunteer Program

Mission of O.U.R. FRIENDS VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

The MISSION of the O.U.R. Friends Volunteer Program is to provide a mutually beneficial space for learning and development in order to support and strengthen O.U.R. vision, mission and values. Volunteers enable us to bring new skills, experience and passion into O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE that help us turn our ideas and potential into reality.

We are looking for people who are passionate about what we are creating at O.U.R. Ecovillage and who are eager to grow, serve, learn and share with us on this journey. Volunteers are a huge source of energy for us and we hope that your time volunteering with us provides you with a rewarding, fun learning experience.

The O.U.R. Friends Volunteer Program seeks to:

- *Provide opportunities for volunteers to actively participate in and make a meaningful contribution to the overall operations of O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE.*
- *Provide volunteers with a positive educational volunteer experience.*
- *Build public awareness around concepts of sustainability and the ecovillage movement.*
- *Develop closer ties to the community served.*

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF, AND OFFERED TO, VOLUNTEERS?

Volunteers are welcomed at OUR ECOVILLAGE in a variety of capacities.

Full Time, Onsite Volunteers

Volunteers living onsite are encouraged to participate fully in life at O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE. We ask that you work full days with the onsite teams for 5 days of the week (generally Tuesdays through Saturday in the high season). Your food and site costs are covered by O.U.R. Volunteers living onsite are also expected to contribute community hours which includes meal clean up and caring for common spaces in addition to community care tasks.

Part Time, Onsite Volunteers

Volunteers who live onsite, and contribute 20 hours per week will have their site costs, though not their food costs, covered by O.U.R. They are responsible for covering their daily or individual meal costs.

Short Term, Visiting Volunteers

For volunteers participating on a short term basis, please discuss details of meal and site provisions with the volunteer coordinator.

GENERAL INFO

Facilities

Volunteers are welcome to use most, though not all, of the onsite facilities. This information is available from the site supervisor. Volunteers should avoid personal phone calls; visits or other interruptions while onsite unless previously negotiated with the site supervisor. If someone should need to reach a volunteer onsite, please ask him or her to identify the individual as a volunteer. Staff persons may not be familiar with all volunteers by name.

Resignation and/or Termination

Placements are not permanent. Either the supervisor or the volunteer may terminate the arrangement if it is not agreeable or acceptable, or when the assignment has been completed. Volunteers are asked to give as much notice as possible if resigning or interrupting the volunteer assignment for an extended period of time.

A volunteer may be released from an assignment if (s)he fails to meet basic standards of professionalism set by the organization and judged essential to performance. Should the volunteer desire a reassignment, he or she should contact the volunteer coordinator.

Employment

There is no obligation to place, interview or hire a volunteer for any paid position.

THE COMMITMENT WE ASK OF O.U.R. VOLUNTEERS

1. To adhere to the same rules, regulations and standards as all others on site.
2. To be prompt and reliable in reporting for duty. If you are unable to report in as scheduled, please notify the volunteer coordinator or your site supervisor as early as possible.
3. To contribute a determined number of hours according to a mutually agreed upon schedule.
4. To complete time sheets in order to keep an accurate record of hours served.
5. To attend orientation and training sessions as provided.
6. To treat the students, residents, fellow workers and visitors honestly, respectfully and supportively at all times.
7. To consult with the site supervisor before assuming any new responsibilities.

8. To protect confidential information and exercise good judgment, remembering that you are seen as a representative of O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE.
9. To demonstrate a willingness to "create community" with others when you are interacting with them.

THE COMMITMENT WE ASK OF O.U.R. STAFF REGARDING VOLUNTEERS

1. To provide adequate orientation and training to prepare the volunteer for a successful service experience.
2. To be prepared for the volunteer to work. This includes providing proper supervision, supplies and workspace.
3. To treat the volunteer as a respected member of the work team.
4. To keep volunteers informed of any changes in policies or procedures.
5. To maintain accurate records of volunteer hours and service.
6. To provide recognition and show appreciation for the contributions of the volunteers on an on-going basis.

ROLE OF O.U.R. FRIENDS VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

O.U.R. Friends Volunteer Coordinator is responsible for recruiting, screening and referring volunteers to the different programs or events. The coordinator acts as a liaison between the volunteers and all the different teams and is available to volunteers should any problems, questions or concerns arise regarding a volunteer position, or should a volunteer desire a reassignment. The volunteer coordinator is also responsible for volunteer induction and orientation.

Please feel free to see the coordinator at any time. The coordinator keeps volunteers and staff informed throughout the year with special mailings and newsletters, and organizes recognition activities. The volunteer coordinator's office is located in the office at O.U.R ECOVILLAGE and can be reached by calling 250-743-3067 or by e-mail at volunteer@ourecovillage.org.

During the day Volunteers are first responsible to their immediate facilitator (called team manager). This person is usually a supervisor in the program or event to which the volunteer has been assigned and is usually available when the volunteer is on duty.

O.U.R Homesteader/ Internship/Re-skilling Program

Mission of O.U.R Homesteader/Reskilling Internship Program:

****under construction****

Role of O.U.R Education Program Manager:

****Under construction****
O.U.R. Homesteaders Program Manager is responsible for

What is Expected of an Homesteader/Reskilling Intern

- Attend the full program of 40 hours per week which you have registered for (unless a health or family emergency is present).

- Complete the program fees payment upon receiving this letter (please send in Canadian funds).
- Be responsible for engaging in the learning community by a) attending experiential/theoretical program classes for approx. 8 hours per day, b) participate in building community dynamic through being part of a 'community circle' (weekly) & a 'council circle' (1 evening per week), C) Bringing intention towards exploring your own leadership perspective.
- Be self-responsible around liability for health, safety, and have your own health insurance.
- Seek support and feedback whenever you feel necessary.
- Participate in rotating task schedule for all the activities/chores which create and support OUR daily living needs.
- Actively engage in facilitating/supporting the learning process for others within the learning community and short-term workshops (including taking a leadership role in team facilitation and teaching of other participants and volunteers).
- Actively engage in creating your own learning process. Take responsibility for getting your educational needs met through your own personal research and explorations and through clear and effective communication of your needs with the staff and teachers.
- Work with the Human Relations (HR) Coordinator to ensure all scheduling, goals/projects, and summer community process is maintained.

What is Expected of O.U.R. Ecovillage and Program Leaders

- Provide a workshop/learning community space, which is, to the best of our ability: safe, nurturing, educational, and supportive.
- Provide food and supplies for 3 meals per day (shared chores), camping space & emergency phone contact.
- Provide a full-featured learning experience from a variety of instructors and locations.
- Furthering the learning community experience by offering up our skills and abilities, & by referencing/linking participants to a wide variety of other human and/or material resources.
- Offer participants support in making personal and professional choices around boundaries/limitations, which may enhance the learning process.

General

- This is not an employment position and therefore does not have any structures relating to you claiming on tax return.
- Reimbursement for travel costs associated with the use of personal vehicles for tasks related to program duties must be negotiated **prior** to carrying out the task;
- Use of other people's property, including vehicles, will be the personal responsibility of the person borrowing the item (whether for personal or work-oriented use) and must be checked out with owner;
- Attend all community meetings and classes in order to stay current with process;
- O.U.R. Community Association/O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE will not be responsible for Workers Compensation coverage or paying premiums on your behalf (if appropriate you must make arrangements for coverage);
- Honor agreements, and maintain confidentiality within the team.
- **Remember to please provide a copy of current Medical Coverage for our office records.**

Information Handbook

What is an Ecovillage?

"Ecovillages are full featured settlements in which human activities are harmlessly integrated into the natural world in a way that is supportive of healthy human development and can be successfully continued into the indefinite future." (Gilman, 1991, p.37).

The motivation for ecovillages is the choice and commitment to reverse the disintegration of supportive social/cultural structures and the upsurge of destructive environmental practices on our planet.

For millennia, people have lived in communities close to nature, with supportive social structures. Many of these ancient communities exist to this day, but are struggling for survival. However, beginning in the 1960s, various intentional communities with spiritual, ecological, and social orientations were formed, allowing people to once more live in communities that are connected to the Earth in a way that helps enable the well-being of all life-forms into the indefinite future.

Depending on who's counting, there are between 500 and 15,000 ecovillages and intentional communities within a loosely knit and globally affiliated network around the world. A number of these villages are in Canada, including O.U.R. (One United Resource) Ecovillage.

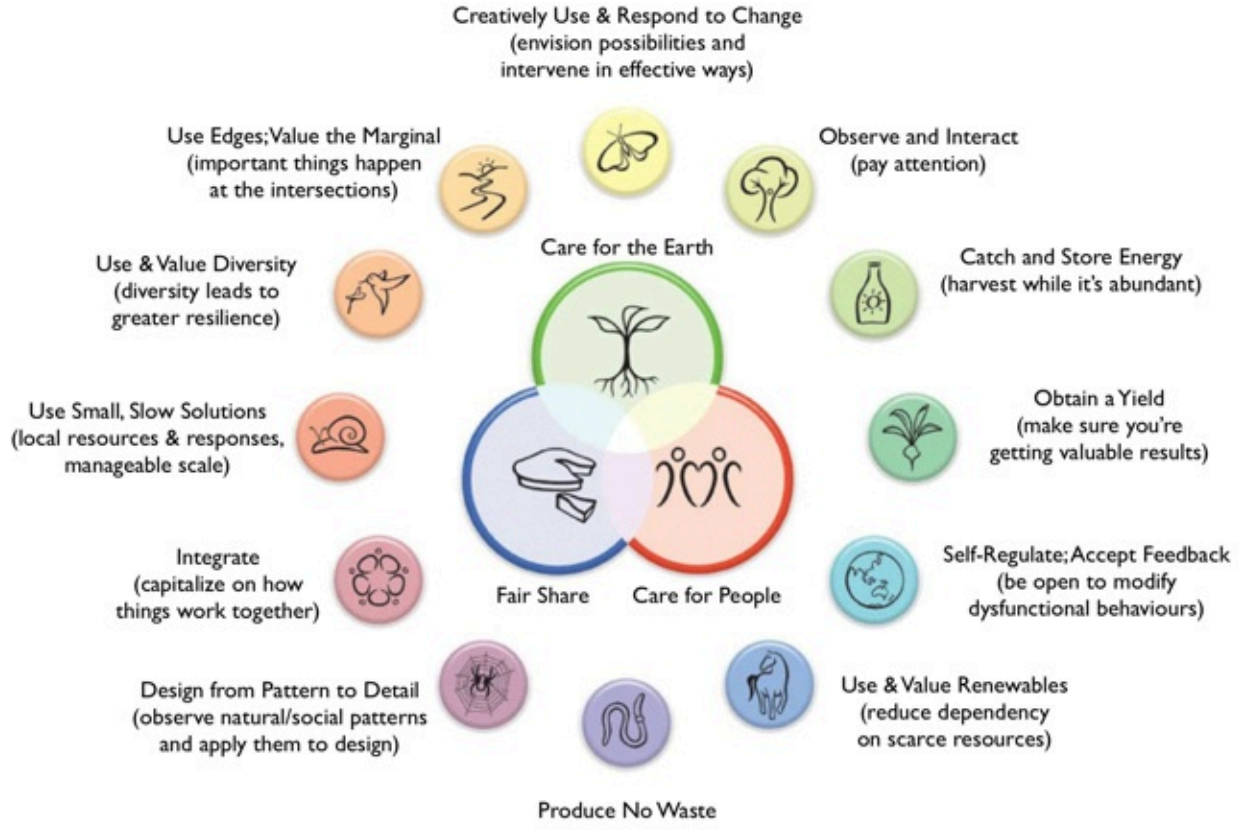
Climate Change Demonstration Building (Healing Sanctuary) with image

INTRODUCTION TO PERMACULTURE

Australian-born Bill Mollison coined the term **permaculture**, meaning "permanent agriculture" in the 1970's. The principles of permaculture were co-developed with David Holmgren.

Permaculture *is a design system inspired by nature which is based on ethics and design principles that can be used to guide you, your household, and your community 'beyond sustainability'*.

The foundations of permaculture are the ethics (care for the Earth, care for people, fair share), which guide the use of the 12 design principles, ensuring that they are used in appropriate ways. The following image displays these ethics and principles of permaculture.



When looking at the above image, a good place to start explaining the image is at "Observe and Interact". Before any interactions are done with land, individuals must observe the land. We will look at naturally occurring patterns to insure that we utilize these naturally occurring systems to their advantage. Before anything was built at O.U.R. Ecovillage, we observed the land for an entire year so we had sufficient information throughout all seasons and time of day to how the land interacts with itself. Things that are important to individuals who practice permaculture may include where the shadow line falls from trees

at various times of the year, where sunlight will hit at various times of the year, how naturally occurring water systems work, and what organisms are naturally abundant on land. As you can imagine, there is a lot of information that needs to be processed before anything is changed on the site.

The next few principles focus on how to effectively harvest the land. We want to use naturally occurring systems and modify them to increase benefits. Everything is done with the mindset to preserve the land effectively and help shape it but not to completely change it. Permaculture is heavily influenced by making **symbiotic relationships,** which means a mutual beneficial exchange. Everything that the land does for us which is a positive benefit, we must ensure that we are giving a positive benefit back to the land. Permaculture principles are 'beyond sustainability' but it is definitely important for us to use what is available on the land. This is as simple as eating what foods are available at specific seasons of the year.

We also want to utilize and have as little waste as possible. At O.U.R. Ecovillage we have compostable toilets which can be used in the following years to act as a fertilizer for plants that are not being grown for human consumption. The use of composts and recycling are extremely relied on here since it is our mission to reuse every item that goes through O.U.R. Ecovillage.

O.U.R History and Development

O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE is an ongoing work in progress with continuous efforts and actions to build and further develop our community mission.

Located on an extraordinary 25 acres near Shawnigan Lake, British Columbia, O.U.R ECOVILLAGE began operations in 1999 with a vision to create a model demonstration sustainable village community rooted in social, ecological, and economic well being. O.U.R Ecovillage is the host site for O.U.R Community Association, a registered non-profit society dedicated to the promotion of sustainable community living. People from all walks of life and all ages are able to benefit from educational programs facilitated within O.U.R developing site.

The idea of O.U.R. Ecovillage had its genesis in the late 1990s when a number of people lived in a cooperative household in Victoria (OUR House). During this time the O.U.R. acronym (One United Resource) was created. Subsequent events can be described in seven different phases.

Phase I (March 1999) involved the private purchase of 25 acres of land near Shawnigan Lake in order to secure it from future development. The former owner was eventually convinced that the proposed development of a vibrant, environmentally friendly community would be a very positive use of the land, and ended up donating a third of the original asking price. A group of approximately 14 people came together as the Creation Team, taking responsibility for the ongoing design and development process of the community project.

Phase II (2000-2002) saw the establishment of O.U.R. Community Association, a registered not-for-profit (Society #541542). An overriding principle was established: that the project would be created “by the community, for the community and through the community” so that none of the overall project would be established for anyone’s primary personal gain - all people would be here as stewards. During this time the Cowichan Community Land Trust and the Land Conservancy of British Columbia worked to create a flora and fauna species mapping of the overall site in order to determine the most vulnerable ecological areas. Next, O.U.R. Community Association embarked on a far-reaching visioning process involving hundreds of communitarians from nearby neighborhoods, various levels of government, people from corporate and educational backgrounds, and international visitors. This enabled O.U.R. Community Vision to be a broad representation of what folks wanted to see happen at O.U.R. Ecovillage.

Phase III (2002-2004) focused on creating a precedent-setting rezoning for O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE. The “Sustainable Land Management Design” evolved concurrent with several years of permaculture design. The 25 acres were to stay intact and become a multi-activity integrated land use zone with:

a) A conservation area consisting of one third of the property under a protective covenant

b) Allowance for educational activities

c) An organic production farm, and

d) An off-grid eco-home cluster of 9 homes (in addition to the existing home currently used as a residence and Bed and Breakfast)

This work with regulatory authorities has brought in major support and funding from government. Eventually O.U.R Team began working with engineering and regulatory teams in earthen construction (natural building) using alternative wastewater treatment and other innovative technologies and doing so within approved building codes.

Phase IV (2002-present) O.U.R. Community Association develops “TOPIA: The Sustainable Learning Community Institute.” TOPIA offers a wide array of on-site sustainable living programs (e.g. natural building, non-cert. organic food production, value added products, health/wellness, community building, etc.).

Phase V (2003-2006) involved the creation and development of the FOG (Finance, Ownership and Governance) research project as an attempt to pull together a new hybrid ownership model for land projects which would accommodate the sharing of common financing, ownership and governance between multiple stakeholders. This new hybrid “Non-Profit, Community Services, Multi-stakeholder Cooperative” was incorporated in 2007 and took over title of the lands and projects of OUR ECOVILLAGE in 2015.

Phase VI (2006-present) saw the incorporation of “The Sustainable Community Development Cooperative.” The SCDC brings together a team of consultants who specialize in ecovillage design at O.U.R. Ecovillage and similar projects.

Phase VII (July 2007 -present) begins with the creation of a new ownership entity (developed with the assistance of the FOG project). In July 2007, we established O.U.R. Ecovillage Cooperative. The co-operative was created for the purpose of providing a legal model for the collective ownership of the land and to provide a governance structure that will bring together all the earlier established organizations at O.U.R. and

all interested parties. The cooperative has begun to implement this plan through the creation of a business plan in order to secure financing for the purchase and further development of the property. This new hybrid “Non-Profit, Community Services, Multi-stakeholder Cooperative” was incorporated in 2007 and took over title of the lands and projects of OUR ECOVILLAGE in 2015.

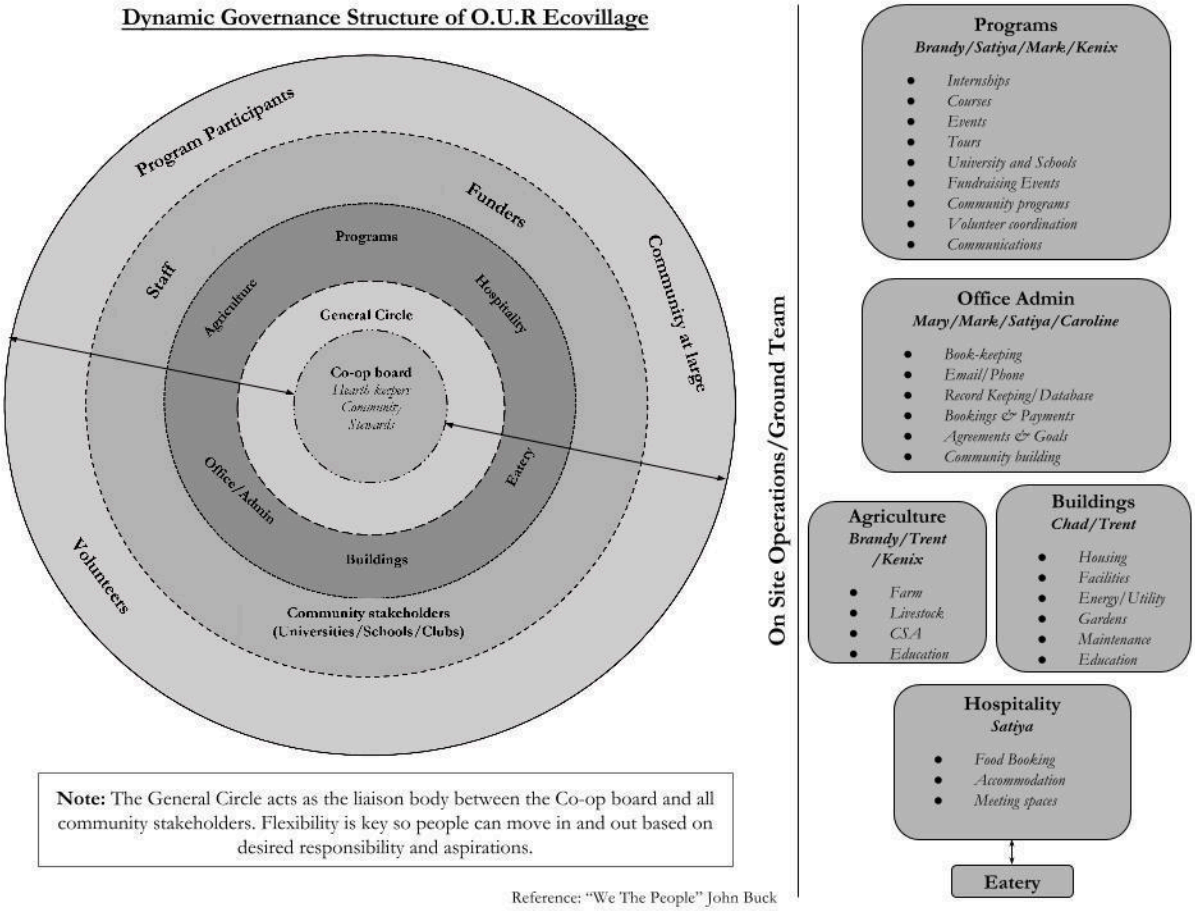
Phase VIII (fall 2015 to present) has seen O.U.R. Ecovillage evolve into a vibrant and nearly built out immersed learning environment with a wider range of international courses and programs lead by OUR onsite community/visiting teachers. With a larger focus on building out OUR Affordable and Healthy Housing cluster for OUR HearthKeepers (long term Coop landowners/dwellers) it is an exciting time. OUR children tend to Homeschool onsite (but not necessarily), OUR Food Forests are maturing, and most of OUR main general infrastucture has been built out. We are able to handle over 10K connections of visitors, gatherings/events, educational activities, a broad range of K-12 grade educational programming, and host over 13 Universities/Colleges. We have a full “Sustainers Program” which allows for individuals and organizations to also become part of the overall magical ecosystem of community at OUR ECOVILLAGE.

O.U.R. Organization and Governance

O.U.R. Ecovillage has been working within a Dynamic Governance model to create a fluid and efficient integration of the many roles and contributions that create O.U.R. that is also in line with the core the values of equality and respect for diversity. (For more about Dynamic Governance, see "We the People" by John Buck and Sharon Villines)

People participate in O.U.R ECOVILLAGE in a number of ways and everyone is part of a team that is connected to the central decision making hub, the General Circle. Roles are assigned and chosen with respect for each person's vision and talent while seeking to balance responsibility and accountability for the long-term outcomes of the decisions made.

The following chart represents an example of the teams and how they relate - keep in mind that this is a snapshot of an evolving structure.



Hearthkeepers

are permanent, long-term residents of O.U.R ECOVILLAGE. They are people who feel called to live by the Hearthkeeper Vision and steward the land and activities of O.U.R. Ecovillage. “Hearthkeeper” is the name of the resident membership class of O.U.R. Ecovillage Cooperative.

Hearthkeeper Vision: The Hearthkeepers of O.U.R. Ecovillage are dream-keepers and fire-keepers. We consciously hold the heart-space at the core of ourselves, our Community and sacred sense of place. We show up open hearted and present, offering our ongoing learning in the service of deep relationship. We commit to stepping through the flames of fear into the fire of love.

O.U.R Community Association: a Non-Profit Society

OUR Community Association (Non-Profit Society) is a BC registered non-profit society that works cooperatively with OUR ECOVILLAGE Cooperative (and was the organization which leased the lands and ran the programs of OUR until 2015 as we awaited the development of OUR full featured hybrid Coop). It consists of a Board of Directors whose members are responsible for all non-profit programming in the community, including fund raising and strategic planning. Both residents and supporters are represented on the Board.

Mission Statement: “To assist in the research and implementation of volunteer and community development that promotes ‘Green Micro-Enterprise’, ethically based/sustainable practices and youth entrepreneurship.”

Its purposes are:

1. To research and study models of alternative, sustainable patterns of living together in community that are:

- ecologically sound
- economically self-supporting
- respectful of other cultures & individual diversities
- based on universal spiritual and moral principles
- intergenerational
- focused on providing opportunities for youth to actively participate in various leadership and service oriented experiences.

2. To provide training and disseminate information on sustainable patterns of community living. Educational programs will emphasize developing youth’s capacity to lead projects and train others in such areas as the following:

- general environmental practices
- sustainable land use
- organic agriculture
- permaculture planning, and
- cooperative co-existence.

3. To develop a demonstration site that is a living laboratory of cooperative co-existence implementing best practices in permaculture management, an ecologically respectful economy and sustainable land use.

4. To serve and interact with local communities and the greater public at large by organizing activities and projects that provide a forum for the mutual sharing of skills and knowledge related to the areas listed above and aimed at enhancing the well-being of all concerned.

O.U.R. Ecovillage Cooperative

O.U.R ECOVILLAGE Co-operative - was incorporated in June 2007. The design principles of O.U.R Co-operative follow the Canadian Co-operatives Association's guidelines and include:

- Open, voluntary membership
- Transparent administration
- Democratic participation - one member, one vote (Decision making process works through Dynamic Governance Model: see Decision Making section of Handbook)
- Ethically based practices (in livelihood and lifestyle)

Its **purpose** is to acquire and manage lands and properties in a creative and sustainable manner. We aspire to create products and services that will be a positive contribution to, and will build upon our goal of creating, promoting and demonstrating sustainable community. As this co-operative assumed title of the property and processes of OUR ECOVILLAGE it became the primary decision-making body for O.U.R ECOVILLAGE and allows for both individual members and member organizations to participate in the governance of the Cooperative.

OUR Coop Membership Share Structure is:

Membership is allocated to 5 membership classes, each of which represents one aspect of involvement in the activities of the community.

- Hearthkeeper Stewards are those adults who intend to take up residence on the land in Shawnigan Lake and hold the space for the realization of O.U.R. Vision and Mission. (Home sites include min. of 2 HearthKeeper share value ie: 20 shares).
- Education Stewards will be those members who participate in education programs directed by the cooperative.
- Agriculture Stewards will be those members who organize and carry out agricultural activities on the land.
- Sustainable Enterprise Stewards will be those who carry on business from space they lease or rent on the property of the co-op.
- Community Stewards will be those members who are not directly connected to the co-op’s property, but support the activities of the co-op and its connection to the broader community.

O.U.R Rezoning Overview: ‘Un-paving’ the Way

O.U.R. Rezoning Overview - ‘Un-paving’ the Way In 2002, OUR Ecovillage completed the rezoning process that created a “Rural Residential Comprehensive Development Zone”. Using permaculture design principles, we surveyed and mapped the property for topography, ecological aspects and biological aspects. We held a number of visioning workshops involving planners, agrologists, permaculture designers, educators, a lawyer, and health professionals from both the public and private sectors. With these advisors, along with local and provincial representatives from the Cowichan Valley Regional District, and the B.C. Ministries of Health, Agriculture, and Highways, we developed a re-zoning application for an entirely new kind of zoning designation.

The entire property is being developed as an environmental "classroom," with four sectors. The Woodlands/Wetlands Conservation sector includes sensitive ecosystems, woodlot management areas, and nature trails. The Agricultural sector combines organic agriculture and animal husbandry. The Ecological Education and Infrastructure sector provides a central gathering area for community educational activities. The Residential sector will have clustered housing.

Insert map that is more ‘visually clear’ than past map

Programs, Projects, Activities

Daily life in the village encompasses such community-building activities as building group process and communication skills, working within a Dynamic Governance decision-making model, practicing conflict resolution, developing understanding around well-being and self-care, enacting a permaculture development paradigm and establishing outreach/educational programs. Below is a sample of happenings at O.U.R Ecovillage:

• Natural Building
We modeling alternative “green” home construction, through hosting educators and/or builders working with “green” and “renewable energy” and teaching natural building practices. The summer school “TOPIA” provides an educational forum for natural building, and has resulted in the construction of various buildings incorporating building techniques from cob, straw bale and clay-slip to timber frame and earth bag: the “Healing Sanctuary” (Climate Change Demonstration Building), the “Art Studio” and “Freya’s House”. Other completed projects include a cob oven & bench, a children’s garden/playhouse, and partially enclosed study/relaxation space (the “Chillage”).

• Educational Workshops & Summer Programs
Full summer internship programs are offered annually, including Homesteaders, Sustainable Food Production Skillbuilder, and Natural Building Skillbuilder, as well as Permaculture Design Certificate courses and advanced Permaculture Teacher Training. (any further updates??)

O.U.R. also hosts a wide range of ongoing workshops to provide education on everything from living in “intentional community”, youth empowerment, consensus decision making, conflict resolution, non-violent communication, alternative resource usage, organic horticulture, permaculture, sacred ecology, forest gardening, and cob/strawbale building, to divine song and dances for universal peace and health.

• Research – Finance, Ownership and Governance (FOG)
We are currently leading a major research project regarding the Finance, Ownership and Governance of ecovillages. (ongoing??)

• O.U.R. Farm/Garden
We have developed a land plan that encompasses our vision of approximately seven acres of food crops from fruit/nut/berry orchards, greenhouses and raised-bed vegetable gardens. These crops will support the food security/food sustainability of O.U.R Ecovillage members and will also contribute to the wider community through “community-supported agriculture”.

• **O.U.R. Guesthouse**
Providing a ‘home away from home’ for eco-minded guests.

• **Animal Husbandry**
Raising heritage breeds of ducks, chicken, goats and sheep ,organic meat and poultry production; use of animals, and their by-products, as part of permaculture design, food production as well as therapeutic programs.

Facility Rental

Facilities available for events include the Community Classroom (approx 2,000 sq ft), O.U.R. Community Commons dorm and ZeroMile Meal Eatery (seats 150 indoors and 150 outdoors), use of a bright, 30-foot-diameter, heated Yurt (a Mongolian canvas dome structure), 4000 sq foot Circus Tent (seasonal), Healing Sanctuary (ideal for health practitioners or small to medium groups), OUR green commons gathering space & firepit for weddings/school groups/events, parking, camping space, fire pit, outdoor kitchen and privy.

The current rates and details are available on OUR website (ourecovillage.org) by calling our office 250 743 3067.

How You Can Contribute

There are many ways to contribute to the vision of O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE, from a few hours of volunteering to an ethical investment and everything in-between. Here is a brief introduction to some of the ways you can become involved.

Ethical Investment Mortgage

The Ethical Investment Mortgage consolidates previous financing that has financed the infrastructure development into a jointly-held mortgage (with option for self-directing RRSP investments for Canadians). It simplifies OUR finances, reducing interest payments, and constitutes a significant step toward the longstanding dream of full legal and financial community ownership of O.U.R. Ecovillage.

As this Mortgage is fully populated it allows the land and infrastructure to no longer be dependent on banks/credit unions. With this said we honour the consistent, and outstanding support, which OUR current mortgage and financing has had with VANCITY CREDIT UNION (which has supported OUR work through barriers to being able to finance multi-stakeholder/multi-activity projects) and to move the opportunity to 'community investing in community'. Contact protect@ourecovillage.org to find out more.

O.U.R. Sustainers

The Sustainers are a growing group of individuals who have signed up to contribute small, monthly donations towards the operating budget of O.U.R. non-profit. O.U.R. Sustainers have access to significant reductions on courses and an annual harvest dinner. The goal is to create a group of 600 people each donating $10 month. Contact protect@ourecovillage.org to find out more, or look on our website.

Volunteering

Thousands of people have put their hands to every aspect of O.U.R. Ecovillage. If you feel drawn to serving in the co-creation of this community project, contact volunteer@ourecovillage.org. All volunteers are responsible for their food and site costs and we will work with you to find the best balance of what is needed and what your unique contribution might be.

Donations

We appreciate donations of all kinds, including materials/supplies, your volunteer time, and/or financial support. You can find out how to make your tax-deductible donation on our website or contact O.U.R. office 250 743 3067.

Wish List

If you are thinking about ‘simplifying’ or just getting rid of stuff, please consider making a material donation to O.U.R ECOVILLAGE. We would very much appreciate donations of items for our organic farm, four-legged friends and educational programs. Of particular interest are building materials and good salvage, as well as commercial kitchen equipment. See the complete list on our website.

The Commemorative Conservation Scattering Grounds; Green Burial Legacy Project

This ground-breaking model combines land protection with a possible answer to a question faced by many as they approach the end of their lives - what am I going to be remembered for? O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE can be a unique and special place to host the end of life celebration and then scatter the ashes of the deceased in the Commemorative Conservation Scattering Grounds - land that is stewarded as sacred by O.U.R. Community and protected in perpetuity under a Land Conservation Covenant. And rather than the typically expensive funeral services, all of this can be done with a tax-deductible donation towards to protection of O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE for future generations. For background on Green Burial and OUR Commemorative Conservation Scattering Grounds check OUR website.

Other Sources of Information

There are many links on http://ourecovillage.org/contact/links/ or http://ourecovillage.org/about/

VIDEO: Peakmoment: Awakening the Village Heart and Mind
VIDEO: Peakmoment: Creating the Impossible – OUR Ecovillage

More information on O.U.R. community, activities and organization available on O.U.R. website ... and by searching the web. (delete or combine with intro link)

Other References

Ecovillage Network of the Americas (ENA): ena.ecovillage.org
Global Ecovillage Network (GEN): www.ecovillage.org
Fellowship for Intentional Communities (FIC): www.ic.org

O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE is created as a “commons” and has 90% been created by the support and affiliation from:

- Federal, Provincial & Municipal Government
- local and international Universities and Colleges
- A wide range of over 85 Business and Corporate Sponsors

A wide range of community stakeholders; individuals, organizations and groups. This includes our onsite Ground Team and Volunteers.