



## SHAWNIGAN COBBLE HILL FARMERS INSTITUTE AND AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY

22/23 Annual Report to the CVRD

Submitted by: Gerry Giles, Secretary  
Date: January 19, 2023

As we transition back to some form what will be our new normal given COVID, the Shawnigan Cobble Hill Farmers Institute and Agricultural Society (Farmers Institute) is grateful to the citizens of Cobble Hill for the annual grant provided to it.

This grant comes from approval given in a November 1985 referendum held during the Cobble Hill civic elections where taxpayers were asked to provide an annual grant to the Farmers Institute. In that referendum, Cobble Hill residents voted 'yes' by over 70 per cent thereby giving permission for an annual grant to go toward the maintenance and operation of the Cobble Hill Hall.

As a result of the pandemic, which had a profound impact on the day to day operation of the organization by stopping all rentals and fundraising activities of the Farmers Institute for almost 2 years, the funds provided by Cobble Hill taxpayers have become even more crucial to the continuation of a society that has existed for 110 years.

Every year the funds provided by Cobble Hill taxpayers have been used to cover annual insurance costs with any remaining funds going toward the maintenance of the facility.

In 2022 insurance costs for the Farmers Institute were \$20,323.89. So far in 2023 insurance costs have been \$23,548.00. Any funds remaining from the grant help this volunteer organization maintain and operate the Cobble Hill Hall, the Youth Hall and the Stu Armour Hall along with the various buildings situated on the approximate 6 acres of land that comprise the Farmers Institute's holdings, which are located in the heart of the Cobble Hill Village.

In addition to making the halls available for rent to the community for a variety of activities, the Farmers Institute supports 4-H by providing free meeting space to this youth oriented group. The Farmers Institute also provides reduced rental rates to health and wellness oriented groups that benefit the community.

The annual funding also enables our volunteer members to plan and carry out annual activities that enrich the lives of many in the South Cowichan area.

1. **South Cowichan Seniors** - Over the past ten years, more than 100 Seniors from across the valley gathered in the Cobble Hill Hall on the second and fourth Mondays of each month to enjoy the Seniors luncheons held there. This program continues to this day and is run totally by food safe volunteers who make and serve a nutritious lunch including dessert to those in attendance. Studies after studies have shown that social isolation amongst seniors leads to serious mental and physical health problems. Therefore, keeping senior engaged in their community by providing programs where they can socially interact with their peer group, which the seniors lunch program does, is essential to their mental and physical health.
2. **Seedy Saturday** - Our annual seed and garden show along with its seed exchange component brings people together to buy, sell and exchange seeds. The focus is on heirloom varieties. This event also provides an

opportunity to learn about many aspects of gardening from the experts in attendance. In 2019 well over 2,500 people attend our expanded Seedy Saturday event held in the Cobble Hill and the Stu Armour Halls. March 11th 2023 is the date of this year's Seedy Saturday which features free admission and plenty of parking.

3. **Easter Egg Hunt** - The first 'hunt' was held in 2011 and it has grown in popular since then. The hunt focuses on providing younger children with a well protected venue for their event while also creating a more challenging environment for older ones. Over 100 children attended our 2022 event, which is without question the best Easter Egg Hunt in the Valley.
4. **3rd Annual Cobble Hill Show & Shine** - features antique, classic and vintage cars, hot rods, fancy motor bikes, antique farm equipment, and our near "world famous Pancake Breakfast." This is a relatively new event but very popular event held in July and draws approximately 100 cars, trucks, bikes and over 2000 spectators. Saturday, July 15th 2023 is this year's Show and Shine date.
5. **Cobble Hill Fair** - The traditional 113<sup>th</sup> Cobble Hill Fair was held last year with over 6,000 guests attending this one day old fashioned country Fair. The Fair is the major fundraiser for the Farmers Institute's operating budget. Planning for this event takes 6 to 8 months and involves hundreds of volunteer hours. 2023 will marked the 114<sup>th</sup> year Cobble Hill Fair.

Ours is an old fashioned country Fair. It embraces everything from farm animals to scarecrow building, to wine making and to vegetable and flower exhibits, to a KIDS ZONE created especially for young children. There are multiple exhibitors and competitors representing many aspects of community life in South Cowichan: bee keeping, history, quilting and the best cake baked by any gender.

Our Fair brings people from all walks of life together to celebrate the importance of agriculture and community. Our 2023 Fair will be held on Saturday, August 26<sup>th</sup>.

6. **2022 Remembrance Day Ceremonies** - On this day, the hall is filled to capacity for the Passing of the Torch ceremony while another 2,000 people wait outside for the Cenotaph ceremony. Time will tell whether this event can be held as usual or whether it will be modified again to be held outside only.
7. **Christmas 2022 and Spring 2023 Variety Shows** - These concerts are held in the winter and spring and are open to the community in exchange for a donation of food or cash for the CMS Food Bank. Over the years these events, featuring local talent, have proven to be wonderful community gatherings while providing much needed cash and food for the food bank.

8. **Pot Pie Program** - In 2021/2022 the Farmers Institute began a very successful pop pie program in order to raise funds when all other events and rentals were cancelled due to COVID. Delicious nutritious pot pies are made by Farmers Institute food safe volunteers and offered for sale to the public. This program has been exceptionally well received in the community and it has become difficult for the volunteers to meet the demand; however, it is a great fundraiser and it has enabled the Farmers Institute to donate more than 500 of these delicious homemade pot pies to the food bank at Christmas for the past 2 years.

The above highlight just a few of the activities of this organization.

All Farmers Institute sponsored events are organized and staffed by very committed volunteers who generously give their time and energy to our community. We are fortunate to live in an area where volunteerism plays such a huge role in our daily lives.

Funds granted to Farmers Institute by Cobble Hill (Area 'C') taxpayers are gratefully acknowledged as being crucial to the repair, maintenance and operation of the Shawnigan Cobble Hill Farmers Institute and Agricultural Society's facilities.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gerry Giles". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "G".

Gerry Giles, Secretary