



SHAWNIGAN COBBLE HILL FARMERS INSTITUTE AND AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY

2023/24 Annual Report to the CVRD

Submitted by: Gerry Giles, Secretary
Date: November 22, 2023

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, which is owned and operated by the Farmers Institute.

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 2023 insurance costs were \$23,548.00 and in 2024 these costs are set to increase by more than 10 per cent. As always, 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 out 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 and to the South Cowichan Seniors group to hold their twice monthly luncheons in the Cobble Hill Hall. The Farmers Institute also provides reduced rental rates to health and wellness-oriented groups that benefit citizens in 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 eleven 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 2023 well over 2,500 people attend our expanded Seedy Saturday event held in the Cobble Hill and the Stu Armour halls. March 16th 2024 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 120 children attended our 2023 event, which is without question the best Easter Egg Hunt in the Valley thanks to our sponsors Bill and Dee Motherwell.
4. **The 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 still relatively new event is already very popular. It is held in July and draws approximately 100 cars, trucks, bikes and over 2000 spectators. This coming year's Show & Shine, which is now in its 4th year, will be held on Saturday, July 20th 2024 so mark your calendar for this great event.
5. **Cobble Hill Fair** - The traditional 114th Cobble Hill Fair was held in 2023 with over just over 4,500 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. 2024 will marked the 115th year Cobble Hill Fair.

Ours is an old-fashioned country Fair. It embraces everything from farm animals to scarecrow building, to wine making, to vegetable and flower exhibits and to a KIDS ZONE created especially for younger children. There are multiple exhibitors and competitors representing many aspects of community life in South Cowichan: bee keeping, history, poetry competition, 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 2024 Fair will be held on Saturday, August 25th and we hope to see you there!

6. **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. Added in recent years has been a fly by of older model war planes at or very close to 11 a.m.
7. **Christmas & Spring Variety Shows** - These concerts are held in the winter and spring. They 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 our food bank.
8. **Pot Pie Program** - In 2021/2022 the Farmers Institute began a very successful pot 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 by the community and it has become somewhat 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 3 years. This equates to approximately \$3,000.00 in value.

The above highlight just a few of the activities of our 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.

If you have any questions about this report, please contact the undersigned at <mailto:schfias.secretary@gmail.com>

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gerry Giles". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G".

Gerry Giles, Secretary