FROM JEAN BROWN, the Chair of the Board of Directors, Cowichan and Chemainus Valleys Ecomuseum Society:

The Cowichan and Chemainus Valleys is considered the cradle of the forest legacy in British Columbia. For nearly a century the region has been the centre of the forest industry, agriculture, and fishing. It has a population of 50,000 of whom 10 per cent are native.

The Cowichan and Chemainus Valleys Ecomuseum is a coordinating body which is developing opportunities for heritage experience in the region. The mission of the Ecomuseum is to preserve and present history and the living heritage of the British Columbia forest legacy, and if the population wishes, other legacies, of the Cowichan and Chemainus Valleys. The Ecomuseum will increase resident and visitor awareness and appreciation of their heritage. The Ecomuseum will also stimulate regional economic growth through appropriate tourism development and marketing of forest legacy themes and heritage experiences.

The Ecomuseum has been based on local initiative from its inception. In the spring of 1988 a non-profit society was formed as the result of the commitment and cooperation of the Valleys' residents and government agencies to develop the Ecomuseum. Because the project is founded on the principle of local initiative, public participation will be extended throughout the life of the project to ensure that its growth is relevant and consistent with community needs.

I invite you to read this summary of heritage experiences, the first step in our plan for the preservation, development and sharing of our natural and cultural resources.

The plan is a reflection of the comment and input of many people. Both individuals and organizations provided their views on our future and what they would like to share with other residents and visitors in a series of public forums in the Ecomuseum. Your contribution and that of the committee are appreciated and applauded.

THEMES

The basic themes of the experiences are:

1. The Forest Industry, including current industry and its history.
2. The Environment, including forest ecology, waterways, landscape scenery, wildlife and the environment and human society.
3. The lifeways of the region, including social patterns and traditions, ethnicity, architecture and folk art, social geography, festivals, events, local traditions and the development of organized labor.
4. People and personalities, including pioneers of the forest industry, memorable people, the personalities of men and women who make the region distinctive.

HERITAGE EXPERIENCES

Heritage experience is the way the resident and visitor comes into contact with, understands, appreciates, and enjoys our communities. These are the qualities the committee believes must be all or part of every heritage experience:

1. active rather than passive
2. sensory
3. social
4. participatory
5. educational
6. entertaining

Dryland Sort on Lake Cowichan: Active Logging
DEDICATED COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS EXPERIENCES

FROM KEN McEWAN, Chair of the Heritage Experience Committee and member of the Executive Board of the Cowichan and Chemainus Valleys Ecomuseum:

This report is the culmination of a great deal of time and dedication on the part of all members of the Heritage Experience Committee and the staff of the Ecomuseum.

It was the decision of the Committee to allow any individual or group to present their own ideas of the valley's heritage without restricting the submissions to the forest legacy. By acting as a "sponge" for all heritage experiences, we were able to introduce more people to the Ecomuseum project and were able to discover a wide range of ideas regarding our heritage themes. The communities did not always see the forest industry as part of their legacy because of stronger ties with agriculture, fishing or mining.

Many of the experiences recommended in this report require some preparation before being promoted as visitor heritage attractions. And the Ecomuseum needs a heritage resource management policy for sites to be prepared and developed by local communities, societies, or private interests, before being marketed.

We need to be conscious of how to correctly market our heritage or we can lose it in the rush to "oversell" the product, our communities. We cannot lose our heritage in the glitz of tacky tourist traps. Some sites may require time and research to develop properly, and I urge you to take that time.

The question "What is the difference between a heritage site and a tourist attraction?" generated a lot of discussion within our committee. It was our feeling that the difference was when the power of the attraction took over our heritage story. Our heritage story should not be changed to make a site more attractive to the tourist. We must let the heritage of our communities in the Ecomuseum stand by itself.
RECOMMENDATIONS

The following heritage experiences are recommended by the Heritage Experience Committee for immediate implementation. All are of high heritage value:

Active forest industry, B.C. Forest Museum, Caycuse Camp, Demonstration Forest, Kaatza Complex, Kinsol Trestle, Ladysmith Railway Museum, Mesachie Lake, Old Mill Park, Paldi, Chemainus Murals, Cowichan Bay Log Dump.

Short-term recommendations are:

Local museums, Marie Canyon, Skutz Falls; Maritime Centre, Mount Prevost view, Chemainus Tribal Council, School District No. 66 Education Centre.

Long-term recommendations are:

Archaeological dig, CNR right-of-way linear park, Cowichan Theatre Community Play, March Farm, Native Heritage Village, Mill Bay mill.

In assessing the more than 140 submissions, the Heritage Experience Committee reviewed these questions:

1. Does the project fit within the goals of the Ecomuseum?
2. What is the heritage value of the project?
3. What is the project’s potential to attract visitors?
4. What is the importance of the project to the community?
5. What is the feasibility of developing and maintaining the project?

6. What is the current physical condition of the project? What is the present state of development?

ECOMUSEUM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The Ecomuseum is developing a tourism strategy based upon local heritage resources. Its task is to assist the population of the region to organize, identify and develop its heritage resources, and define the type of tourism desired. Marketing to selected targets will then follow. The process will occur in three stages:

1. Identify and inventory heritage resources: by participating in this process, residents will better comprehend their own distinct region, history, and way of life, and what they have to share with others. They will participate in the decision-making steps of the strategy.

2. Coordinate individual resources into an overall package of complementary experiences, developing a marketing strategy.

3. Market the Valleys as a heritage tourism destination.

The Heritage inventory process just completed is not intended to be either exhaustive or final. The immediate objective was to provide an initial inventory of heritage resources upon which the Ecomuseum can build during its formative period. It is both necessary and desirable that the Ecomuseum continues to respond to input from the community in order to broaden the base of heritage experience and remain an interactive force in the region.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Committee members are: Keith McEwan, Chair; Phyllis Comrie, Secretary; Stefan Bugil, Day Woodgate, Bhagwan Mayer, Victor Hignell, Russ Fuoco, Rob Powers, Peter Elliott, Wilma Wood, Rick Goodacre. Bev Griffin, Curator of History at the Royal British Columbia Museum was Advisor to the Committee.

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