



Mayor's Report

November, 2017



Our community possesses an abundance of wonderful attributes but the one that always seems to rise above all others is its capacity to be generous of spirit and heart. This once again was evident with the recent fundraising event for Sue Head - who was terminally ill - for and her family, just a few days prior to Sue's untimely passing. The Kin Club organized a fundraiser event at the Riverside Inn and through the Kin Club's efforts and the generosity of our community a substantial amount of money was raised to help Sue's family through a difficult and trying time. It never ceases to amaze me how this community comes through time after time when compassionate needs arise. While I am so familiar with this community above all others, it still makes me so proud to know there are so many in this community who are so caring, compassionate, and generous. Thank you all for your continuous contributions in supporting the less fortunate.

This same type of generosity was also evident when the Lake Cowichan School senior girls' volleyball team qualified to represent our school and Vancouver Island in the British Columbia Provincial Championships in Fernie, BC. Congratulations to this team for achieving this superb accomplishment, a success that hasn't been achieved in over fifteen years. With only one week between these girls qualifying and then travelling to Fernie, there wasn't much time for the fundraising efforts to help offset their required travel expenses. This is where our community's organizations, businesses, and individuals showed their support by stepping forward with generous donations to enable this team to go to the Provincial Championships. This opportunity is deserving and they were rewarded because of hard work and strong team play. We are extremely proud of this team and will be following their progress at the Provincials closely as they represent our school and community. Good luck Lakers!

Fifty to sixty citizens attended our Public Meeting on November 20, 2017. Public engagement is definitely beneficial to the local government decision making process and we certainly were encouraged by the turnout for this particular event. Normally we don't have an agenda for our Town Hall Meetings and we have simply provided these forums as opportunities for our citizens to ask questions or provide input on issues regarding their community. This time to keep our by-annual meetings from getting stale we decided to present three important initiatives that are critical pieces to our future. First we had a presentation from the Lake Cowichan First Nations. Aaron Hamilton and their consultant, Dave Kitsack, talked about future projects that they envision will bring prosperity to our communities. Included in these plans were a Health and Wellness Facility, a restaurant, marina, a condominium style housing complex and a lakefront walkway. These were conceptual ideas for future growth opportunities and at the same time beautifying their North Shore lands. These looked amazing.

Next up was the Lake Cowichan Fire Department's Risk Manager, Steve Vatcher, and a professional forester, Margaret Simmons, who spoke to the audience about the Fire Smart programs and their usefulness to our community. These programs have been extremely well received throughout our town with six individual communities (neighbourhoods) signing up to participate. Having this tremendous buy-in is certainly encouraging as it signifies the desire of our citizens to better protect themselves and their neighbours from wildfire destruction. These programs utilized the funding that were made available, one grant was for \$10,000 for the Fire Smart Planning, and the other for \$22,000 was for a Community Wildfire Preparation Plan.

Les Bowd, the Chairperson for our Advisory Planning Commission, was the third presenter. He explained the important role the commission plays for the Town and how it is looking for volunteers for three Working Groups to help with the update of the Official Community Plan. The goal is for a collaborative effort to create a healthy and prosperous future using broad and deep community engagement processes. The Advisory Planning Commission are looking for your participation to form working groups based on the following principles:

1. Built Environment— Downtown, neighbourhoods, highway commercial & tourism, industrial transportation;
2. Social Environment— Housing, Recreation, Parks and institutions, inclusive and age- friendly policy, urban agriculture; and
3. Natural Environment— climate change, waterfront, greenways

The APC would like you to join them in the journey of creating our future. If you have any desire of participating on any of these three working groups, please contact the Town office and they will pass on your information to our Advisory Planning Commission. Thank you to all the presenters for the information you provided. Our future looks brighter because of your positive outlook. All the questions and comments from everyone who attended is greatly appreciated.

Recreation was front and centre with respect to two public engagement meetings that were held recently. The first up was held in the lower Lake Cowichan community hall on November 9, 2017 and was centred on regional recreation. The consultants, RC Strategies, divided the 31 citizens in attendance into two groups for participant input. This was the fourth such meeting RC Strategies hosted on this topic in the Cowichan Valley Regional District and they commented that this was not only the most attended meeting so far, but also the most passionate. I can only speak for the group I participated in but there were many recreation activities identified. Most people only identify with the obvious activities that require dedicated facilities such as hockey, curling, pickle ball, golf, baseball, slow-pitch to name a few. However our community has many more available activities that are often overlooked when talking about recreation, some examples mentioned were hiking, boating, fishing, and hunting to name a few. There were many more potential opportunities identified that

because of our natural environment they could be made compatible to our community. Ideas mentioned included different disciplines of cycling “down-hill”, “cross” “mountain-biking”, sailing, kayaking, and rowing as examples of recreation that could be introduced or enhanced. Some of these activities could bring an economic boost to our community and might require a new way of thinking utilizing a partnership wherein public, industry and private land owners could cooperate and work together to overcome some of the restrictive obstacles that currently exist.

Passion was certainly evident when the topic turned to what if any should be regional recreation as opposed to local recreation. This obviously was a touchy topic and strong opinions were voiced supporting both sides of the subject. This is the type of healthy dialogue that is important in the local decision making process. The contents of this workshop could be a useful tool around future recreation initiative.

RC Strategies + Perk also hosted the general public in the Curling Lounge on November 14, 2017 to gather public input and responses around the best use for the curling rink portion of the Cowichan Lake Sports Arena. It was reported that about 125 people attended and filled out surveys and placed their comments on the six boards with the following questions:

1. What is your favourite thing about the Cowichan Rocks Curling facility?
2. Why is it important to have a curling facility in the Cowichan Lake area?
3. Are there opportunities to increase curling participation?
4. Are there opportunities to increase use of the facility in the off-season (non-curling “dry floor “season)?
5. Why should repurposing of the facility be considered? How would repurposing the facility benefit the community? And
6. If the facility is re-purposed, what is the best use of the space? What community needs can be addressed?

All comments and active participation for this traditional use of the facility is helpful for those considering its future. Place speak on the CVRD website also received a lot of dialogue on this subject.

Catalyst Paper hosted a meeting at the community hall on November 15, 2017 to gather public feedback on its lake pump-down application. Eighteen people attended and listened to Catalyst talk about their preparation and reasoning for why they are submitting an application for a ten year permit to use pumps to draw down water from the Lake. Pumping is seen as an absolute last resort to maintain needed river flow if the Lake reaches zero storage due to a prolonged drought. Public consultation is a requirement for the permit process and it was good to see people out for this stage of the process.

As emphasized in this report there were four different meetings with four different methods used to consult the public. The Town, Catalyst and the CVRD & RC Strategies with two separate meetings all used different methods and formats to present and receive information. These are all useful and effective ways of consulting with the public to include them in their decision making process. Many thanks to all our engaged citizens who recognized the importance of these processes and took the time to personally participate at these events for the betterment to our community.

Thank you to everyone who helped decorate the Town for Christmas as well as those who organized and assisted with the Cowichan Lake Chamber of Commerce/ Country Grocer Santa Parade. Community morale is important to all of us and your efforts are certainly appreciated. The lights look beautiful and the entrance to Town magically welcoming.



Ross Forrest, Mayor