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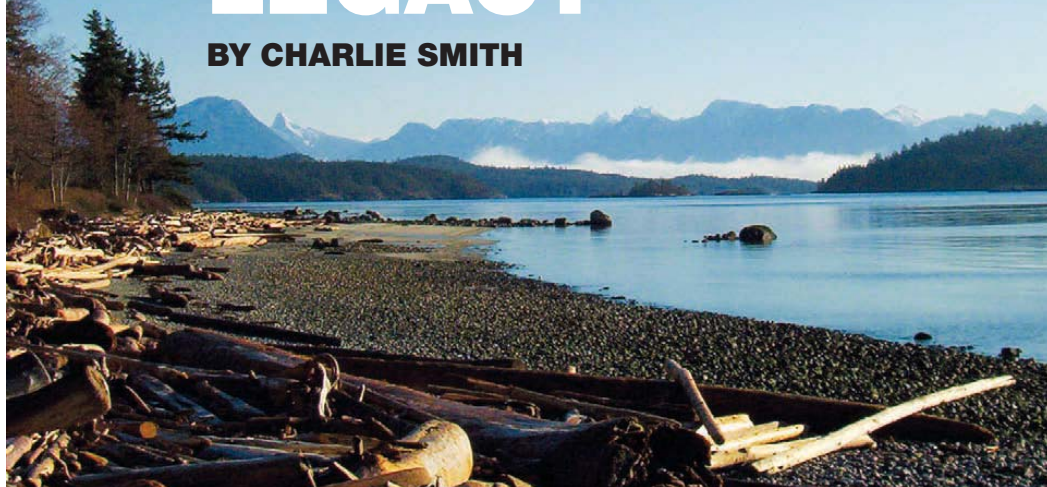
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LEARNING
+

BUILDING HOLLYHOCK'S LEGACY

BY CHARLIE SMITH



Over the past 25 years, people from around the world have visited the sandy beaches, organic gardens, and rustic forests at Hollyhock, an educational retreat perched on 58 acres of Cortes Island. Some have camped under the giant cedars and Douglas firs, while others have enjoyed secluded rooms with private baths. And if the centre's 45 partners have their way, the Hollyhock experience, as well as its impressive menu of educational programs, will remain a West Coast landmark long after they've passed away.

Jane Siberry), poet Patrick Lane, and Nick Bantock, creator of the Griffin & Sabine trilogy. Accommodation rates range from \$77 per person per night in a tent to \$255 for a single room with private bath and include vegetarian buffets and naturalist-guided walks.

Hollyhock was created in 1982 on a site formerly known as the Cold Mountain Institute. One of the founders, Vancouver writer and ecologist Rex Weyler, says the group originally created a company because of his experience working with nonprofit organizations, including Greenpeace. Weyler, who sold his stake in the mid 1990s, says that right from the start, the partners wanted to practise sustainable development and offer educational programs.

Joel Solomon, the volunteer president of Hollyhock's board of directors, says that the partners came to an agreement last year to donate their shares so that Hollyhock could be converted into a not-for-profit business. A corporation owns the land and buildings, and a separate limited partnership owns the operating business. Solomon adds that Hollyhock's board is applying for registered-charity status. If the Canada Revenue Agency approves, people will receive tax receipts for making charitable donations to Hollyhock.



"The operations of the business will not provide the capital to take care of the campus properly," Solomon says. "Also, after 25 years, we felt the contribution that Hollyhock makes was increasing in its necessity and its importance, and that the world was opening up more to social and ecological values."

Solomon, 52, says he became a partner around 1985. He is now president of Renewal Partners, which has helped finance some of B.C.'s best-known social-purpose companies, including Happy Planet Foods, Inhance Investment Management, and Capers Markets. His wife, Dana Bass Solomon, is CEO of Hollyhock, which focuses on personal, professional, and organizational development mostly on Cortes Island, though it recently started offering programs in Vancouver.

The Hollyhock Leadership Institute, a charitable partner of Hollyhock, promotes social change by providing skills to social entrepreneurs and to nonprofit groups. "The Great Bear Rainforest campaign had a number of meetings through the Hollyhock Leadership Institute where different groups with different strategies came together to hash out their differences and to try to figure out how to work together," Solomon says.

This year, Hollyhock will feature personal-development programs on such topics as animal communication, art, cooking, relationship-building, non-violent communication, Tibetan Buddhism, yoga, morphic resonance, holistic approaches for coping with cancer, and integrative medicine. Professional-development workshops and conferences cover such areas as the art of leadership, media that matters, and the Social Venture Institute.

Solomon and Renewal Partners founder Carol Newell, a Hollyhock financial backer, have been among the biggest contributors to the B.C. environmental movement, as well as to social-justice groups such as the Pivot Legal Society.

Teachers include well-known doctors and authors Andrew Weil and Gabor Maté, musician Issa (formerly

For more information on Hollyhock, go to www.hollyhock.ca. ♦

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