



John Horgan MLA Malahat-Juan de Fuca

Community Report APRIL 2008

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Provincial Funding Gets A Failing Grade

The issue of school closures has been in the news a lot lately.

Three schools in my constituency—Glen Lake, Koksilah and École Mill Bay—are all on the chopping block and, sadly, the decision to close Glen Lake is final. Additional schools in Sooke and Langford are up for discussion next year.

Everyone knows the explosive population growth our area is experiencing.

The area around Glen Lake is no exception and the Westhills development will see thousands of new units in the years ahead.

You would think schools would be a high priority of our government. Sadly, because of

the misguided funding policies of the BC Liberals, the School Board is funded on a per pupil basis that does not factor in the costs of building and maintaining our public school infrastructure.

More and more families are moving to the South Cowichan. École Mill Bay is a single track French immersion program that started at Elsie Miles Elementary in Shawnigan Lake. When that school closed two years ago, the program moved to École Mill Bay. On the day the school closure was announced, 38 children signed up for kindergarten.

It's currently a kindergarten to grade 2 program, adding grade 3 next year and additional grades each year. Should École Mill Bay be closed, it means that kids who started kindergarten at Elsie Miles will be

going to their third school before finishing grade 3. That just doesn't make sense to me or the people in the Cowichan Valley.

Koksilah Elementary has a 98% First Nations population. These students are from the Hul'qumi'num community

of the Cowichan Tribes. For the first time in generations First Nations have some comfort that the education system is doing something for their children rather than something to their children.

These are people who lived through the tragedy of residential schools. Today, they are empowering their children and grandchildren. Every day elders come and teach language and culture to the kids.

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The public has had enough.



John with Hannah Seymour, President of Koksilah Parent Advisory Council, and Chuck Seymour, Cultural Coordinator with Cowichan Tribes Education and a parent.



John took part in an April 7 rally, organized by LANDS (Let's Agree Not to Dispose of Schools), calling for the government to stop the sale of public school lands.

Community Offices

WEST SHORE

Mon-Fri 10am-4pm
800 Goldstream Ave.
Victoria, BC
T: 250 391-2801

SOUTH COWICHAN
Tue-Fri 11am-3pm
17-1400

Cowichan Bay Rd.
Valleyview Centre
Cobble Hill, BC
T: 250 733-2521

Toll-free
1 877 391-2801

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COMMUNITY EVENTS

April 19 Come out and bash broom in the Highlands. 9:30am Pike House. Broom is our most common invasive species. Bring brushes, small chain saws, loppers. Pickups needed for transport to Highlands. Call Bob 478-4403 or Marcie 474-4725. Sponsors: Highlands Stewardship Foundation and HDCA

April 23-27 *Spring Arts Show & Sale Extravaganza 2008* Quw'utsun' Cultural and Conference Centre, 200 Cowichan Way, Duncan. Cowichan Valley Arts Council presents SASS~e - annual arts show, acclaimed Cowichan Valley artists. Gala Opening, April 23, 7-9 pm. Show: Thurs+Fri 10-8, Sat 10-6, Sun 11-4. Free admission, donations welcome. Info: 250-746-1633 or www.cowichanvalleyartscouncil.ca.

April 25 *Battle of the Bands*. Bear Mountain Arena. 14-18 year old musicians duel it out on stage. Each band gets a 15-min. set; music range: blues, reggae, ska, rock, metal. 7-10:30 pm. Tickets \$6. Info: acooper@jdfrecreation.com

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Failing Grade, continued

It's supported by the School Board and the Teachers Association but the provincial government has put the Board in a position where they may have to close the school. For a Premier who says he supports a new relationship with First Nations, he has an odd way of showing it.

The public has had enough. I have attended many meetings in school gyms and Board offices over the past months. On a recent



Friday night in Duncan, hundreds showed up to offer support for their neighbourhood schools. Last

week I was at a rally organized by individuals in our community trying to stop the constant closures and the potential sell off of public school lands.

At a time when we have billions of dollars in surplus, shouldn't education get a better grade?

Making Eco-Sense in the Highlands

John recently had the opportunity to get a tour of a unique new home being built by Ann and Gord Baird in the Highlands. It's North America's first code-approved seismically engineered load bearing insulated cob house featuring solar PV and wind power, grid intertie, solar thermal heating, rainwater harvesting from a living roof, composting toilet, grey water re-use, and passive solar design.

The Bairds believe family, the environment and the community are all inter-connected. One supports

the other and all need to be in balance for us to live a reasonable life - living respectfully within nature and avoiding the "bigger, better, faster, more" mindset that defines overdeveloped countries like our own.

The Royal BC Museum was so taken by this concept, and the cob home, that they decided to feature it as part of their exhibit celebrating BC's 150th birthday.

To learn more or to book an individual or group tour, please call



478-2680 or check out Ann and Gord's website at www.eco-sense.ca.

Pink Power



Lower Island MLAs wore pink to the Legislature on February 27, to bring attention to the issue of bullying and harassment.

The Wear Pink Campaign began last year in Nova Scotia after two exceptional students took a stand. They came to school wearing pink after a fellow student was harassed and bullied for wearing pink on a previous day. The bullies used

homophobic slurs to taunt and to hurt their victim.

Many schools and workplaces throughout our province have started to acknowledge this day, by encouraging the wearing of pink. By taking a stand, both in the Legislature and in our communities, we're sending a clear message that now is the time to end bullying and harassment.

John is joined by his lower island colleagues, David Cubberley, Carole James, Maurine Karagianis and Rob Fleming.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

April 26 Sooke Family Arts Fair, 10 am–3 pm, Seaparc Leisure Complex, 2168 Phillips Rd. Bring the family and experience the Arts. Interactive demos for all ages featuring Visual Arts, Music, Dance, Acting. Presented by Sooke Community Arts Council, with support from the BC Arts Council and District of Sooke. Info: 642-8000

April 29, 30 & May 1 Lakewood Elementary presents 'Honk!' – an Olivier Award Broadway adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's, *'The Ugly Duckling'*. Info: contact the school 474-3449.

May 1–4 Spirit of Cowichan Days. South Cowichan Valley Celebration: Spirit Pole, 150 wooden boats, First Nations canoes, historical exhibits, a sail pass, musical & theatrical entertainment, Captain Jack Sparrow, kids' activities & more. For schedule information phone 250-746-9940 or email info@cowichanbay.com

May 2 Langford Firefighters Evening for Afghanistan Featuring Vic High R&B Band. 7:30 pm, Westin Bear Mountain Hotel. Tickets \$50 at Langford Fire Rescue, 2625 Peatt Rd; 478-9555; www.cityoflangford.ca/fire Proceeds support the CAN-S.A.F.E Project (Canadians Sending Afghanistan Firefighting Equipment)

April–May Emily Carr Community Festival of Arts and the Ecology A project of Climate Action West Shore (CAWS), a grassroots community alliance championed through the West Shore Chamber of Commerce. For a schedule of events in our region: West Shore Chamber 478-1130, info@emilycarrfestival.ca or <http://emilycarrfestival.ca/>