



Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society

Dedicated to Protecting Victoria's Heritage Landscape

June 6th, 2019

President's Report
2019 Annual General Meeting
Douglas Fir Room, Saanich Commonwealth Place
4636 Elk Lake Drive

Since our last AGM we received many more pleas for help, beyond the usual ones regarding developers of private land. Local governments and regional authorities pushed forward with trail building, road construction and a new sewer system which has seen the threat of trees falling and the destruction of natural areas.

It may seem that efforts to save Garry oak ecosystems and much of Greater Victoria's urban forest are under attack. Saanich's EDPA was voted down and its replacement seems far away. Developments are increasing pace as many cash-in on real-estate trends. Collectively, we are making a difference which is heartening as we see Community Trees Matter Network growing out of a desire to bring more voices together in support for our urban trees and forests.

To help address these pleas, we redesigned our website, creating FAQs and hi-lighting local tree preservation bylaws to empower residents across the CRD. We are moving forward, using social media to share these options and a new volunteer Jill Smillie will be guiding us. Another new volunteer, Joe Furness, has stepped forward to assist us using his unique skills as a lawyer.

This year our Executive completed the task of transitioning our Constitution into a digital format as mandated by the BC Societies Act. The last step introduces amendments which will be presented tonight.

We were saddened by the news that a former Director of GOMPS passed away in 2018. Metchosin Counsellor Moralea Milne, described by friends as an outstanding leader and a champion of the natural environment, will be dearly missed. The community is coming together to honour her memory by restoring a Garry Oak Ecosystem for environmental and educational purposes. This includes removal of invasive plants and replacement with suitable native plant species. GOMPS has offered Garry oak seedlings to this project.

We have moved forward with our Garry oak nursery to the point where we are ready to begin moving out stock. This project, decades in the making, is under the direction of dedicated volunteers Peter Woodward and Jenny Hebb who have forged relationships with the City of Victoria, the CRD but more importantly with the volunteers who care for our seedlings.

Schools are getting involved and students are making their voices heard. Doncaster Elementary is taking an interest in their Garry oak ecosystem which was previously an off-limits area. Teachers from George Jay and Marigold Elementary Schools have reached out to us. Efforts at Reynolds High School are helping to restore land near the Galloping Goose and their own school grounds on Borden Street.

Most of the emails we receive are from those seeking help, many, afraid of what will happen as Garry oak habitat is destroyed. Many express frustrations as developers move ahead with little regard for natural areas, trees in a manner which seems unchecked by local governments.

There is however, a bright side as recently we received an email from a Saanich resident living near Playfair Park. Motivated by the efforts of Colleen O'Brien, the writer said:

"I didn't realize I have a Garry oak meadow in my own back yard. I would love for a section of my back yard to look like Playfair Park and am willing to put in the hard work."

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Croteau". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "M" and "C".

Michael Croteau
President, Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society

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