

# Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society

## President's Report for 2018



The past year was quite busy for the Society mainly due to citizens looking for help as development increases the loss of mature Garry oaks. Rising property values seem to drive land sales and development.

One of the greatest setbacks was the Saanich Council vote to remove the EDPA, the Environmental Development Permit Area, which sought to protect such habitat. In other areas retail development, housing construction and projects in parks motivated people to seek our help.

Residents of North Saanich learned they have no tree protection bylaws and our enquiries uncovered little desire to craft any. In Oak Bay large oaks, sequoias and other significant trees are under threat as the changing demographic prioritizes land use for housing. A number of people turned to us hoping we had a magic solution but as they soon discovered they were the ones who really held the power. Colwood staff requested input for a tree protection bylaw and welcomed submissions from GOMPS. Pearson College staff have expressed a desire to learn more about the Garry oak and are incorporating them into their grounds.

GOMPS Directors are often called for help and we tell people their best weapon is the tools their local governments have granted them. Most local bylaws allow neighbours to have input into land use yet some residents fail to use it. In other cases, those fortunate enough to live on precious land with Garry oak ecosystems failed to protect it using the powers of conservation covenants – something GOMPS has the power to help with. Such was the case of a former GOMPS Director who recently passed away, leaving his land unprotected.

The year of 2017 saw the greatest progress in our nursery with a contract being awarded for a nursery manager. We completed our first 5-year sub-license with the City of Victoria and are currently waiting to hear from them regarding the extension of this sub-license. Our Oak inventory at the nursery is growing. Assistance is coming from volunteers and other professionals in the area. Work continues on crafting an operational plan for the nursery. Our membership numbers have not grown but there is new hope as volunteers increase and we move into social media to help spread the word.

There are always opportunities to volunteer with GOMPS and we invite you to join us!

Michael Croteau  
President, GOMPS  
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