

providence farm

Newsletter

Hello to our Farm friends,

As rains give way to warm sunny days and life stretches skyward there can be no question Summer is upon us. With immense gratitude we at Providence Farm embrace the land; growing food to nourish our bodies and engaging with nature to bring peace to our minds. A collective excitement permeates the air in anticipation of the joy and laughter we will share in the coming months. Buildings fall silent as participants and staff clamour to green pastures and cool forest canopies. Dark earth clings to our hands and colour to our cheeks as we continue to grow together.

Happy Summer!

- Conrad Murphy
Site Manager, Providence Farm



Thank you Volunteers!



We cannot overstate just how much the generosity of our volunteers informs and improves what is possible here at Providence Farm. Day in and day out, these special people offer their time and energy across all aspects of The Farm.

Volunteers help take care of our "family" by preparing meals in the kitchen, tending to our garden beds and lawns, helping with all stages of husbandry in the fields and orchards, offering skills to operate or to repair endless amounts of machinery, by volunteering in our thrift store, donating their time as members of the board of directors and by contributing to all of the important bits and pieces in between.

Tom Todd is a volunteer that continues to go miles above and beyond for The Farm. Over and over again he offers his time, energy, knowledge, skills and caring heart. Tom has dedicated his efforts across many facets of our organization including serving on the Board of Directors.

Recently, Tom went down into the depths of our sewer system to repair the main sanitary pump station. Using his knowledge, determination and just enough grit, Tom orchestrated the whole repair from start to finish! He succeeded in spearheading the analysis, accumulation of supplies, delegation of tasks and manual restoration of our system. This job was not a glamorous one in any sense of

the word and yet he devoted himself to not only fixing it but to communicating effectively and to happily imparting his wisdom throughout the process.

We are eternally grateful for Tom's contributions to Providence Farm. He is something of a legend here, having contributed substantially in many ways for many years. We are blessed to have his support and his friendship.



If you are interested in volunteering at Providence Farm or know someone that may be a good fit for our team we would love to hear from you!

Whether you are able to volunteer for an hour "here and there" or are looking for something to be a part of on a weekly basis, we have opportunities for you.

Please contact Denise
250-746-4204
communityrelations@providence.bc.ca



The Hands Of Our Farm



With Providence Farm currently under shared direction by our management team, some of the staff have begun affectionately referring to the trio as "the head, the heart and the hands" of The Farm.

Conrad Murphy, Site Manager, is "the hands" of the Farm. He oversees all of the more physical demands of Providence including: managing the many aspects of agriculture (planting, harvesting, production, sales), animal care, repairing physical structures and machinery (including vehicles and tractors), maintaining both the inside and outside of our many buildings and barns, keeping our driveway accessible, monitoring invasive species (plants + animals), overseeing brush removal, maintaining our trails, monitoring for dangerous trees, facilitating compost and soil production, keeping our tenant and event locations up to date, communicating with; our caregivers, site/agriculture related volunteers, staff and tenants, assisting allotment gardeners and much, much more!



As many of you know, Conrad was welcomed to Providence Farm by our previous Site Manager, Marc Beauchamp, in March 2021. Together these two worked side by side as Marc reduced his hours and stepped into "semi retirement".

Conrad brings with him a vast variety of education and experience as well as a beautiful sense of humility and a hunger for learning. Over this past year, Conrad has begun learning the 'lay of the land' here at The Farm (both literally and figuratively). With the help of volunteers and staff, Conrad has facilitated a number of significant improvements around The Farm including an overhaul of our old chicken coop (now complete with an accessible walkway and lighting!), sheep barn upgrades, remodeling of our front entryway stairs, a full renovation of our Eco Arts programming space, updating of our caretaker cabins, refreshing the interior paint within Providence House, setting up a new system for hanging garlic, welcoming new creatures to the farm including: a new colony of honey bees, 4 new sheep and 100 future egg laying chicks all while supporting the organization as a Co-Executive Director!

We are tremendously fortunate to have Conrad as part of the team and as part of our "Farmily". He brings with him a quiet, collected and yet quirky zest for life. His love for the

animals we care for and for the land we occupy is palpable.
If you haven't met him yet, you'll see it when you do!

As a community, we look forward to what further adventures
Conrad and his team will see us through!



Animal Assisted Therapy (Our newest additions)

Providence Farm continues to strive in support of our mission to “focus upon the renewal of the body and spirit, upon people caring for the soil, and upon the soil nurturing the people”. With deep appreciation for the wide range of lived experiences of our participants and the ways in which we can express stewardship of the land, as an organization we continue to grow. By embracing Trauma Informed Practices and Nature Based Therapies we thrive within a new era of understanding mental health and diverse abilities.

This Spring, we started reaching a little bit further still – with
new research and appreciation for Animal Assisted
Therapy.

With this came the introduction of 4 new "family" members!



These little beauties are “babydoll” sheep. Babydoll Southdown sheep are known for their docile, gentle dispositions and trainability. They have a good reputation as pets, livestock and as therapy companions. They are small in stature and are easy to handle. They are known to be outstanding pets, friendly for all ages, and also produce fleece that is said to be “in the class of cashmere”!

The names of these sheep were workshopped with participants. Their names are Bejane, Royal, Happy and Ernest!

Their addition to The Farm was made possible by the generous donation of long term ongoing Providence Farm supporters and friends, [The Duncan Lions!](#)



There is a wealth of research on the benefits of Animal-Assisted therapy (AAT) for a wide variety of people including those living with brain injuries, mental health concerns and developmental disabilities, including those living with PTSD, ADHD, anxiety, depression, epilepsy, individuals on the autism spectrum, survivors of sexual assault and more [1]. Sheep are considered good therapeutic animals for their attention to emotions, their individual personalities, docile temperaments, and social nature [2]. Similar to dogs, sheep that are raised to trust and socialize with people seem to genuinely enjoy spending time with people of all ages [3].

But sheep are not the only animals that can be enrolled within Animal Assisted Therapy. In fact, AAT can be gleaned from interactions with all sorts of animals; i.e. from the sense of calm that can come from cuddling with a bunny or the generalized care of animals such as chickens! Therapeutic benefits within AAT can come from tender interactions *and* out of feelings of agency; i.e. from having a sense of responsibility or the satisfaction of self efficacy that often accompanies providing care to others and from the positive feedback that results from successfully completing tasks [4].



AAT has shown to have positive effects on participants' sense of motivation, feelings of satisfaction, positive emotions, and social behaviours [5]. Studies have also demonstrated that AAT animals can become relevant therapeutic partners for people who have trouble connecting verbally, struggle with feelings of shame or for those that may be highly alert to social evaluation [6].

Therapeutic animals often also provide motivation for other activities and a sense of achievement; offering those who may have difficulties with daily life activities, (i.e. such as independently getting dressed, cooking or eating) the opportunity to succeed in accomplishing these activities by feeding and caring for the animals [7].

Not only are we enjoying getting to know these little sheep and diving into AAT with

our animals, we also look forward to when the sheep are settled enough to share the benefits of interacting with them with the greater community too! Incorporating group interactions with fellow organizations and schools will be a great way for us to share the healing benefits of The Farm while furthering our mission to support people within the valley more broadly.

[1 to 7] - click [here](#) to review our Reference List



In addition to our new little lambs, Conrad and the agriculture team also recently welcomed 100 new heritage chicks and a new colony of honey bees to The Farm!

The Birds:

These lovely ladies will be in charge of our future egg production. They will provide us with an array of egg colors, shapes and sizes that the Program Participants are already looking forward to collecting for our Farm Stand.

These heritage hens have been brought to The Farm to replace our previous flock. As our old hens edged towards retirement Conrad began to evaluate the pros and cons of different chicken breeds and came to the conclusion that heritage hens will offer a more wholesome experience for Participants - with longer, softer lifespans, more docile personalities and more variety in terms of their plumage (making building relationships between individual participants and individual chickens easier to decipher) and their egg color (adding to the excitement of Farm Stand production efforts!).



These hens were purchased from Jackie Rousseau contracted through [June Creek Farm](#). Jackie not only hatched and cared for these 100 chicks until they were 6 weeks old. She also provided us a generous discount and hand delivered the flock to Providence Farm! Jackie's efforts went well above and beyond to support Providence Farm. With rising feed costs and avian flu concerns her commitment was tenfold. Thank you Jackie!

As for our old hens (for those who are curious) these lovely ladies were entering egg laying retirement and nearing the end of their expected lifespans. All have been successfully rehomed to different families across the island. There they will live out their sunset years!



And The Bees :

In addition to the hens, a new colony of Honeybees was purchased locally and has now been set up in our blueberry patch! These bees will help pollinate our gardens and the surrounding area including our many allotment garden beds rented by greater community members, here on site!

As many of you will well know, bees are of tremendous importance to our surrounding ecosystems (stewards of the land in their own right!) and are threatened world wide. It is with hope that we add these new bees to the area.

Our Site & Agriculture Team

Our "Site + Ag" team has ballooned for the Summer and feels better than ever!

We are blessed to have a really great team of hardworking, genuine and fun people on board!



The importance of the site and agriculture team cannot be stressed enough. As a working Farm there is a never-ending amount of hard work to be done. For the Summer, we are happy to introduce 4 (soon to be 6) Canada Summer Job students! To start, currently we have Timothy and David working alongside Cass as Agriculture Assistants. This trio collaborates with a number of dedicated volunteers under Conrad's management; tending to all aspects of agriculture and animal care.

Most recently Cass is happy to report that the team successfully planted over 960 potatoes, 1500 pumpkins, 16,500 garlic and



more! The team is currently gearing up to harvest garlic, starting first with cutting the scapes for use in our kitchen and to sell at the Farm Stand.

Cass has been a part of our team since she started as a volunteer in 2018 and we all know we are lucky to have her! As our lead Agriculture Assistant, Cass is reliable, dedicated and hardworking. She finds great pride in working the land. Her favourite tasks include carefully transplanting growing seedlings from their trays to the fields; tucking each one in with compost and soil row after row.

When asked how she has been enjoying working alongside new Summer Students David and Timothy, she chuckled and said, "They have great attitudes and fun personalities and are not shy at all!".

(photo below for context).



Two other students here for the Summer are Maddie and Nicole - our Environmental Technicians! These two are rocking the position with their bright personalities, intelligence and open minds. The "Enviro Tech" team's job is an interesting one centered on environmental science and sustainability. The position includes a wide range of unique tasks such as; monitoring an invasive species of



frog, catching and quantifying crayfish in our ponds, mapping our forests for broom, old growth and much more!



The two of them are enjoying the openness and variety of the position, learning what it means to be "Environmental Technicians" as they go! They are both scientifically minded with a passion for nature. Maddie grew up here in North Cowichan and is inspired by forest ecology and biology. She has an easy smile that brightens the room around her and is clearly quite smart! Maddie feels driven to pursue further education in conservation, perhaps conservation consulting, and is currently prowling the course list for next year - dreaming up her next roster of course possibilities!

Nicole, on the other hand, grew up in Ecuador and studied Environmental Engineering in Spain! This globe trotter, found her way to BC after falling in love abroad and is happy to now call the island home. Nicole is driven and hardworking and her eyes sparkle when she talks. She is eager to complete her required exams (x2!) in order to officially work here in Canada as the engineer that she is!

Both seem comfortable together, braving the trails as hiking buddies as they explore our property and record their data.

Most recently, they have been enjoying checking the trail camera they set up - so far capturing wide eyed deer and the occasional hiker. They hope to spy a bear or a cougar some day but - only through the trail cam!

It's a pleasure to have these two women on our team!





In addition to these new faces, we are fortunate to be able to say that Marc still supports Site too! This man may have been inching towards retirement - but he has certainly not showed any signs of slowing down! His smile and end of day whistles carry through our buildings and across our property. His knowledge and experience here on The Farm continues to be an asset. We are grateful to have his continued support!

The Power Of Community

Huy tseep q'u to our friends at Khowutzun Forest Services and with FireSmart BC for your invaluable support!

KHOWUTZUN
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION



These dedicated groups have been working hard to help ensure fire safety here at The Farm with proactive measures including an extensive fire safety analysis, developed FireSmart treatment plan, broom and invasive species removal and advice for the future. This process was a collaborative effort done to ensure fire safety at The Farm now and ongoing. We are deeply grateful for the volunteers from FireSmart BC who dedicated an enormous amount of time, hard work and resources for our growing relationship with Khowutzun Forest Services. Thank you for your support!

To learn more about [Khowutzun Forest Services](#) or to increase your awareness of [FireSmart BC's](#) initiatives, click their logos!



BRITISH COLUMBIA
FireSmart™

By now you all know there is always something interesting going on at Providence Farm! Recently, for example, the "SoilRes3 Lab" from UBC was here doing a research project! This group of MSc students is looking at biochar as a tool for drought management and climate change mitigation on agricultural fields. This group reached out to Conrad with the hopes that they would be able to study our



soil. Their long range goal is "to identify to what degree biochar can be helpful in drought and nutrient management, and if activating the biochar with manure prior to application can increase its benefit".

They explained that "it is anticipated that due to climate change, agricultural production in our region will experience a decrease in summer precipitation and water availability". Their research may help inform farming practices going forward, an initiative we were more than happy to support!

We are looking forward to having this team return in the Fall and to reviewing their findings when they're published! For more information about SoilRes3 Lab [click here](#). Otherwise, stay tuned!



The [Horticulture Technician Program](#) at Camosun College also came to The Farm this Spring! Dale Toronitz and Lisa Greig joined us with their Class of 2022 for a first annual prune back of our heritage apple trees! Our Horticulture Coordinator, Michelle, is a graduate from that program and called upon their expertise to help support The Farm. Not only did this group donate their time to helping care for our beloved trees, instructors Dale and Lisa also committed to making this an annual event!

This partnership is a beautiful one on a number of levels. It is also something of a 'full circle' feeling for us at The Farm as it was instructor Lisa Greig who first told Michelle about Providence -- encouraging her to check us out! As you may remember from our last newsletter, Michelle certainly did follow Lisa's advice! First reaching out as a practicum student, then as a volunteer, Michelle now acts as our very own Horticulture Coordinator! We are immensely grateful to The Horticulture Technicians of Camosun for introducing Michelle to us and for taking time out of their days to contribute to The Farm. As Michelle says, "we absolutely appreciate their effort, energy and time contributed to The Farm. It is recognized and deeply appreciated".



Now! Not only did we have UBC and Camosun on site recently - we also were approach by a group of generous students from Shawnigan Lake School eager to give back! This outstanding group of teens is part of the Shawnigan Lake School Service Club. They proved to be tremendously hardworking, kind and fun! It was a pleasure for Community Relations Coordinator, Denise and Horticulture Coordinator, Michelle to get their hands dirty alongside this crew of truly great people. These students dedicated their time and energy after school to dig deep and clean up our front entry way, completing a landscaping project well worth their time! A huge round of applause and our deepest thanks to Danica for reaching out to us to make this happen and to the whole Shawnigan Lake School Service Club team for their support!





It is with great thanks to [West Coast Seeds](#) that our greenhouses and gardens continue to overflow with life! Each year this organization donates a significant number of seeds to Providence Farm. The St. Ann's Garden Club in particular wished to send out their deepest thanks to West Coast Seeds' for their continued support!

For those of you not familiar with this organization; West Coast Seeds is local to Vancouver BC. They are committed to principles of organic growing and sustainable agriculture and are dedicated to ensuring high quality seeds are made accessible to green thumbs far and wide! The organization's overall considerations of gardening and relationship to the land echo our values of stewardship and health while their prioritization of education and community outreach inspire us! Their seeds always thrive within the hands of our staff and participants and we are truly grateful for their generous ongoing support!



A loving letter For us all

A letter from our dear friend Maria :

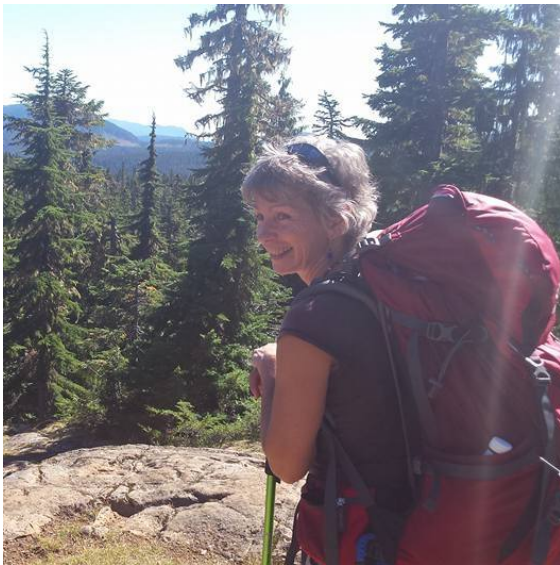


*Memories are the
Greatest Treasure.*

*So many years, so many people,
and so many memories – of
course there is not time to
mention them all and
mentioning any would make
some seem more important than
others, and they are all
important!*

My kids grew up on Providence Farm, and they too will carry incredibly special memories with them forever (my daughter was married in the chapel here). It was 1998 when my sister and I and our children came to live on site as caretakers, and for several years before that I had volunteered at the Therapeutic Riding and Greenways Programs. I saw so many changes and so many people come and go – there were amazingly good times, and some not so good times (like the time we discovered a mink had gotten into the chicken coop; some memories you cannot erase no matter how hard you try). But the good memories far outweigh the not so good.

I was so happy and honoured to work at Providence Farm, knowing that with my small part I was helping to make this world a better place, and in return working here challenged me and made me a better person. I am so proud to have shared this path with so many truly fine people; participants, staff, volunteers, board members, allotment gardeners, even renters and all those folk fest folkies – we were all each others' teachers, and you all left a profound mark on my heart.



TIME

Time cannot steal the treasures
That we carry in our hearts,
Nor ever dim the shining thoughts
Our cherished past imparts,
For the memories of the ones we loved
– still cast a glow,
To grace our days and light our paths, wherever
we may go.

~Unknown

*I will remember my time here with fondness and reverence
and hold my memories in a special place in my heart always.*

*With fondest regards,
Maria*

Collaborative Efforts!

Site and Agriculture may be "the hands" of The Farm but they certainly connect too with "the heart" - Programming! Our participants and programming staff are integral supports that assist with the ebb and flows that Conrad and his team encounter season to season.



These two Providence domains often come together to help share the load. Whether that be collaboration with maintenance of our property, careful planting of our seeds, tidying up of our buildings and grounds, splitting wood, sorting recycling, caring for our animals, preparing items for sale at the farm stand or partnering to process an onslaught of items (i.e. last year's 20,000+ garlic!) when harvest time suddenly hits; the participants and programming staff are happy to support!

In fact, even the admin staff get out there and lend a hand on "work days" when the demand calls!

Programming also supports site with soil and compost production. Whether that involve using the soil sifting machine, turning composting piles or moving this sustenance from one location to another in support of our garden beds!



Programming's most recent contributions to Site maintenance include special projects such as refreshing signage for our buildings and our trails. Together staff and participants are taking down old signs then sanding, re-staining or painting them and returning them for all to see! For some of our participants this is a really meaningful opportunity to connect to locations they have bonded with over the years, for others it is an opportunity to hit the trails and learn someplace new!



Another collaborative effort at The Farm includes the care of our thriving permaculture beds. A trial of our "no till" method was inspired by our previous Nature Based Therapy Coordinator, Pete Stacey, who's dedication to our gardens and love for our participants continues to positively influence us.

Today, Pete's permaculture beds are well established and continue to flourish in what is known as our "Sunflower Field".

This method is quite unique in terms of visual appearance and in approach - which has had some of our community members quite curious over the past year or so! With the pay offs in terms of decreased labour (weeding) and increased health of the soil now evident, Conrad and his Agriculture team find themselves convinced!

Conrad looks forward to continuing to support this "no till" initiative and is considering expanding the approach to our other fields as well.



Farm Stand Spotlight



Did you know our Farm Stand is run by our participants?



Monday - Friday our Farm Stand is tended to by our Nature Based Therapy crew.

This group is part of each item's story the whole way through; tucking seeds in the soil, tending to sprouts, harvesting the bounty, packaging, pricing and sharing the love!

Every item you buy from our Farm Stand is the result of our programming and thanks to the dedication of our participants and staff!

We like knowing where our food comes from, maybe you will too!



Monday - Friday 9 am to 2:30pm. 1843 Tzouhalem Road.

Wish List



If we could wish upon a star for donations to help enhance operations here at The Farm, here are some of the things we would hope for:

- a strong wagon for Farm Stand hauls
- ergonomic gardening tools or shovels
- safety gear to wear while i.e. weed whacking
 - helmet with visor
 - ear protection
- large stainless steel frying pans (no non stick please!)
- a kitchen-aid type mixer
- colourful kitchen aprons x 12
- plain white plates or bowls
- ski pole walking sticks
- a line trimmer
- a power blower
- a "hot water on demand" or independent water heater
- Volunteers! (Specifically Landscape and Thrift Store support!)

Please contact us if you are able to donate any of the above!

250-746-4204

provfarm@providence.bc.ca

Click Here to
Donate!

Every Dollar Helps!

As a registered charity, Providence Farm gratefully receives donations to continue its important work of stewardship of the land and delivery of programs and services.

Every dollar helps the Farm to further plant hope, cultivate joy and provide evermore meaningful opportunities for some of our more disadvantaged community members.

[Click here to donate online.](#)

To make a cash or cheque donation, please mail to

Providence Farm
1843 Tzouhalem Road

Duncan, BC
V9L 5L6

Registered Charitable #
119 281 780 RR0001

Thank you!

