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Bimonthly Publication of The British Columbia Society of Landscape Architects



Parks of Vancouver

Conservation Paradox • Sumas Clay • Chinatown

February / March 2004

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Sitelines is published six times per year; February, April, June, August, October, and December by the British Columbia Society of Landscape Architects and is mailed to all BCSLA members, registered landscape architects, associates and affiliates. The editorial deadline is the 8th and advertising is the 16th day of the intervening months. Advertising rate information is available on request. Inquiries regarding editorial, advertising, or other issues should be addressed to the Sidelines Editor, c/o the BSCLA at the above address.

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The purpose of **Sitelines** is to provide an open forum for the exchange of ideas and information pertaining to the profession of Landscape Architecture. Individual opinions expressed are those of the writers and not necessarily of those of the BCSLA.

Planning the New Parks of Vancouver

BY KATE DAVIS-JOHNSON MBCSLA

The City of Vancouver has been infused with a great many new neighbourhoods, new parks and new life over the past twenty years. It is remarkable how much growth has taken place since Expo 86 and this has had a positive effect on downtown Vancouver. The City of Vancouver Central Area Planning Department has been involved with Marathon Developments and Concord Pacific in pursuit of liveable neighbourhoods which incorporate the necessities of urban living, from parking to schools and community centres, as well as the integration of commerce, parks and public art. It is only with masterful planning that everything is considered and successfully achieved. Planners, landscape architects, architects and engineers, as well as numerous city staff have been working behind the scenes in neighbourhoods such as False Creek, Bayshore Gardens and Coal Harbour to achieve not only liveable residential and park spaces but beautiful streetscapes, parks and waterfront areas.

On the North side of False Creek, forty-one acres of new parks have been contributed by developers over the last ten years. These parks include: Creekside Park, David Lam Park, the



The Inukshuk by Alvin Kanac was placed overlooking English Bay after Expo 86, as a gift of the Northwest Territories, photography by Gregory Dash, Vancouver Parks Board

Roundhouse Community Centre and Park, George Wainborn Park, Cooper's Park, and Andy Livingstone Park. An anticipated population moving into this neighbourhood is 15,000 people. Based on existing neighbourhood park demographics, a ratio of 2.75 acres per 1000 residents was calculated as the required park space. For these new neighbourhoods, Park and City planners first envisioned that these parks should be on the waterfront. It is, of course, one thing to envision and (continued on next page)



The cover image is a view from the Seawall in Stanley Park, beyond the Lion's Gate Bridge toward the snows of Mount Seymour Provincial Park, Photograph by Gregory Dash, Vancouver Parks Board.

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Vancouver Parks - continued from previous page

another to achieve and years of planning and negotiation ensued before these parks came on board in Vancouver.

In Coal Harbour thirteen acres of new parks comprise: Harbour Green Park, Marina Square Park, Cardero Park and Coal Harbour Community Centre Park. Using the same ratio of parkland to people, park space was planned for a population of 5,000. Again these parks were located on the waterfront. The design of Harbour Green Park has been recently recognized with an Excellence on the Waterfront Award award at the 2003 Conference in Montreal.

The overall layout of these parks within a very urban context required skillful planning. Given a lack of private outdoor space, these parks needed to provide something for everyone. Throughout the forty-one acres in False Creek, every pathway, playground, planting area, tennis court, playing field, and washroom facility, was designed to meet the needs of this new population. The seawall has been designed to accommodate both a shared and separated pedestrian and cycle/rollerblade system, each with a ten foot pathway width. Cyclists stay on the asphalted path, while pedestrians walk on the paver surface. Another addition of park space to the Downtown South/Yaletown neighbourhood is called Emery Barnes Park. This is a one acre park which is half developed. The second half will be developed over the next two years.

Beyond being spectacular additions to the downtown core, these parks have a common characteristic - they all need care and operating funds. These funds come from what is termed 'Added Basics' funding in the city of Vancouver. This fund allots money to new or upgraded projects for the operating costs of the park. Over the last ten years, the waterfront in the downtown area has dramatically changed.



Coal Harbour, Philips Wuori Lon gLandscape Architects, photograph by Gregory Dash, Vancouver Parks Board

Meanwhile, there are a number of older parks which need attention. They have degraded to one degree or another over time, often due to a lack of drainage, and pathways and playgrounds are becoming rundown. The current Capital Plan provides funds to revisit older neighbourhoods and upgrade some of the associated parks.

We are constantly looking for additional parkland to purchase as well. We have two park properties awaiting development following their purchases: one on McGill Street on the Eastside and one at Osler and Selkirk in the Marpole area. We have also been adding new property through a purchase of buildings with a conversion into park space at such parks as: Grimmitt park, 8th Avenue and Fraser Street and Teaswamp Park. Other new parks throughout the city such as: Arbutus Greenway, Hastings Park Italian Garden and Sanctuary, the west side of New Brighton Park, Gaston and Melbourne Park in the Collingwood neighborhood are contributing to the growing acreage. This year we are completing upgrades to Victory Square, Thornton Park, Strathcona Park and Queen Elizabeth Park, to mention just a few. The Queen Elizabeth park project is a four million dollar rebuilding above the reservoir which was recently reconstructed by the GVRD in a seismic upgrade.

Over the next two years of the present Capital Plan, we will be developing two artificial playing fields. A public process is taking place right now to determine exact locations. We will also be developing a downtown skateboard park this Summer. It is to be located adjacent Andy Livingstone Park across Union Street. This will fulfill a need in the community that has been desired for a long time. The final phase of the Collingwood community park system will be added this summer as well.

To meet the demand for park space, the costs of upgrades and to operate 211 parks, as well as community centres, rinks, and pools, the Park Board is continually looking at initiatives to create revenue and to share the recreational aspects of park development with others. To this end, the newly created Park Partnership programme invites partners to work with the Park Board to not only help finance development; but to participate in the stewardship of the Park system. The Neighbourhood Matching fund involves neighbours in a park setting who would like to volunteer and contribute to the liveability and use of their neighbourhood park through endeavours such as art, planting or walkways.

The Park Board has no plans for slowing down. Design discussions are furiously going on right now for the future of some



Henry Moore Knife Edge and Bloedel conservatory in Queen Elizabeth Park, photograph by Gregory Dash, Vancouver Parks Board.



Giardino Italiano, Hastings Park, Phillips Farevaag
Smallemberg Landscape Architects, photograph by Gregory
Dash, Vancouver Parks Board

small and very large projects. A park is being planned at the intersections of Mainland and Nelson Streets at the edge of Yaletown. It is a developer's contribution and has an overview of Mainland Street through Yaletown. City and Park staff often work together in the planning of large tracts of land such as False Creek Flats and the twenty-six acre parcel proposed on the south side of False Creek in conjunction with a green architectural development. Then there is the planning of the new Convention Centre, the Knight/Clark Streets Corridor project; Eburne/Canfor Lands, the Still Creek storm water plan and the NE False Creek/International Village continuation plan, to name a few. There are also cur-

rent park projects which will keep planners and landscape architects collaborating into the future. Some of these are the Fraser River Parks and Public Access/Walkway, a Parkland Acquisition Study, Riley Hillcrest Facilities Masterplan, a Rink Renewal Plan, and a Park Stream study.

In summary, I have heard people say that Vancouver has retained a pedestrian scale along the waterfront areas, through changes and growth in population. Pedestrian scale has made living downtown an attractive choice for people, when compared with opting for the suburbs. This defines exemplary planning. ■

The Land Conservation Paradox

BY PAUL DEGREEF

It is not uncommon for residents of the Georgia Basin to regularly encounter some form of media coverage on the troubling plight of Garry Oak meadows, wild Pacific salmon stocks or the red-listed Marbled Murrelet. Development pressures, pollution and ineffective resource management are commonly cited as causes for environmental concern in our region, and indeed throughout our province.

There are two divergent camps that tend to dig trenches on either side of no-man's land with respect to environmental issues. On one hand, staunch environmentalists, with an unyielding passion, fight for the survival of anything that symbolizes wilderness. At the other extreme, those driven to acquire wealth carve away at the edges of the very same wilderness with little attention to its function, its frailty or existing beauty.

Actively staking a claim in the middle of no-man's land turns out to be a dangerous proposition. Philip Brick coined the term 'the radical middle' since people or organizations situating themselves in the middle position often find themselves being

attacked from both sides. The battle between polarized camps sets the stage for an intriguing paradox in the land conservation movement in British Columbia.

BC's Land Conservation Background

The history of British Columbia's organized land conservation movement is short. Conservation trusts have sprung into existence over the last ten years with amendments to the Canadian Land Titles Act in 1994, empowering non-profit organizations to hold conservation covenants. A conservation covenant is a legal agreement between a landowner and a nonprofit organization that limits uses and activities on a property in order to protect its conservation value. Establishment of conservation covenants spurred the evolution of a community of local land trust organizations. These organizations operate with the goal of securing conservation covenants on privately owned lands. Many groups also advocate environmental stewardship and work to resolve site-specific environmental concerns, in many cases forming an organizational basis for grassroots environmental activism.

Local and regional land trusts, organized as charitable organizations under Canadian tax laws, are directly involved in conserving land for its natural or cultural values. Land trusts can purchase land for permanent protection, or they may use one of several methods such as accepting monetary donations and registering conservation covenants with willing landowners. The use of conservation covenants is an advantage for land trusts because it bypasses the necessity to purchase land outright. However, covenants are costly to institute and administer and require a forfeiting of some property rights by landowners. In short, money, and lots of it, is necessary to make meaningful strides towards conservation goals.

A curious paradox has emerged in land conservation that is effectively illustrated through the following example from the United States. It would seem that land conservation, as a goal would be upheld by the heart of the environmental community. After all, protecting habitat, cultural heritage, scenic values or significant natural features is what conservation is all about. However, a political conundrum complicates matters. Large, multi-national environmental groups such as the Sierra Club have grown in politi

(continued on next page)

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cal influence and regularly flex their lobbying muscles through the courts. Their power to affect change is directly dependent upon their ability to influence Congress to enact pieces of legislation such as The Endangered Species Act of 1973 and to use the courts to challenge those who threaten the environment. In contrast, the emergence of problem solving groups, such as community-based consensus groups, and their success in resolving environmental disputes has attracted the attention of federal legislators in the US. This is all to the chagrin of environmental organizations who view collaborative solutions, where, for example, loggers and environmentalists sit at the same table to resolve disputes, as a sell-out approach to conservation. The multi-national environmental groups stand to lose their power base if legislation begins to change in favour of locally generated and site-specific solutions to environmental problems. The result is that environmental groups have opposed local, site-specific opportunities to affect positive change on the ground, in order to retain a legal influence and in fear of tarnishing their image with financial supporters.

In British Columbia, land trusts face a sim-

ilar conundrum. Their role as environmental advocates prevents them from taking on the more aggressive promotion of, or partnerships with, the developmental community since they do not want to be associated with an activity that could be perceived as environmentally degrading by their memberships or financial supporters. Land trusts partnering with land developers would be a logical collaboration because the land development community has access to land and has the flexibility necessary to implement conservation covenants. As well, individual developers could use these new tools to stay competitive in a market place that is slowly growing more sensitive to environmental issues.

NEW PERSPECTIVE

The conservation covenant is a conservation opportunity that is underutilized in BC. The development community could establish their own program of donations into a 'limited development trust' that would be used to register conservation covenants against portions of a development site. Looking to our neighbours South, this sort of activity has precedent in the United States where land trust organizations "purchase" conservation covenants

or development rights from developers.

Land conservation deserves a fresh look from a wide range of individuals and organizations concerned with physical changes to the landscape. All Canadians have access to conservation tools, and a wide range of professional disciplines can benefit from having a closer examination of the full range of possibilities. "Working together for better results" is the theme for the upcoming BC Land Summit in May 2004. This theme seems entirely appropriate in the realm of land conservation also. Only through cooperation and collaboration will we be successful in achieving meaningful conservation goals. ■

Paul is a recent graduate from the Master's of Landscape Architecture Program at UBC. He is currently working in Victoria as an Associate with Aqua-Tex Scientific Consulting. He can be reached by email at paul@degreeff.org.

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Sumas Clay

BY GAILAN & GOYA NGAN

Where does one fire a ceramic sculpture the size of a coffee table? This was the question I asked myself while creating large ceramic pieces – clearly oversize for a regular pottery kiln - for an art exhibition this winter. A visit to Sumas Clay Products in Abbotsford provided me with the answer. Their colossal beehive kilns were the perfect solution, and the industrial atmosphere of a factory filled with giant machines producing thousands of stacked brick products, made it a special place for an artist to work. When I asked if I could come and work periodically over the summer I was welcomed. The company is owned and operated by the Sumas First Nations Reserve, which is located at the base of the clay-filled Sumas Mountain. After about a week at Sumas, it became clear that I was also learning about another place: the Fraser Valley, Sumas Mountain, and First Nations culture. The conversations with some of the workers became a form of cultural exchange. I learned, for example, that Ray Silver, an elder member of staff, began working at the plant on his fifteenth birthday, on

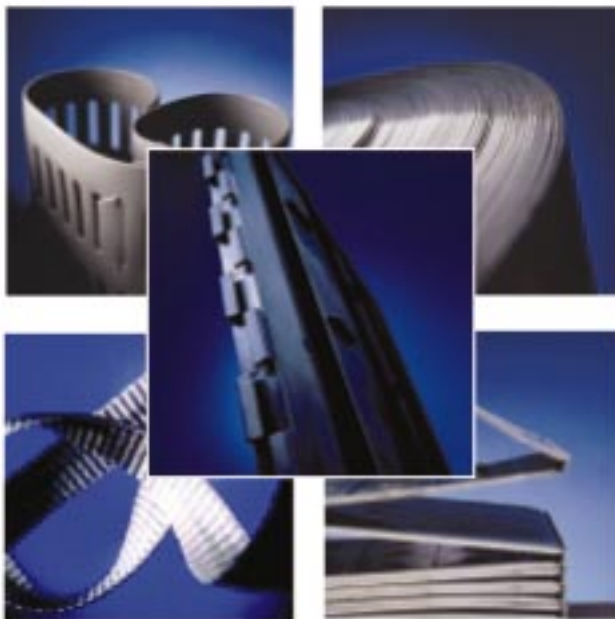


Beehive Kiln at Sumas clay Products, photograph, Gailan Ngan

March 1, 1944, with a letter of permission from his parents. A gregarious and charming world traveller, he speaks fondly of his long career and relationship with the Sumas area. He operates the tumbler where milled to get an "antique" look that is currently popular. Some of the items typically manufactured at Sumas are being used as part of my gallery installation.

Sumas Clay Products was established in 1911 and the production technique, though mechanized, has essentially not changed. The original operators leased the factory from the Reserve

until the Reserve took over the lease and operation in 1979. The clay was drilled and blasted, and its removal has left fifty-six kilometers of tunnels through the mountain. Today Sumas clay is open pit mined. The clay is blue shale and buff (low-grade fire clay) and is mined in several areas to supply a variety of colours: purple, black, red, orange and brown. The blasted dry clay is trucked a short distance down the mountain to where it is mixed with grog (crushed recycled brick used to reduce shrinkage during firing) and then put in an extruder
(continued on next page)



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where it is mixed with water. The clay is pumped through a dye by 7,000 psi pressure. When they come out, the bricks are moist and resemble wet concrete. They are then stacked onto pallets and taken by forklift to a drying bay. Once the bricks are partially dry, they are hand stacked up to three metres high in the kiln. The natural gas fired downdraft kiln is ten metres across and holds up to 120,000 bricks at one time. The firing lasts a week and reaches 1110° C before the kiln is turned off and left to cool for another week.

The kiln shed houses twenty or so old beehive kilns. Walking inside one of these kilns makes one think of what it must be like to enter an ancient temple. There is a circular air vent at the centre top of the dome that also lets in light. The inner walls of bricks have undergone numerous firings at extreme temperature

ranges, which make them look aged beyond their time. Some kilns are the originals from 1911 while others, which are still in use, were constructed around 1950. These are some of the last beehive kilns still in use in North America. The products manufactured at Sumas are primarily face bricks, pavers, flue liners, agricultural tiles, and chimney pots. In addition to these kiln-fired products, expanded clay pellets are produced in a rotary kiln. As the tubular kiln rotates the pellets are carried through the kiln's increasing heat until they fall out the other end red-hot. This method of rapid heat increase allows the clay to puff up like popcorn.

Like landscape architects, potters are interested in the appearance and function of surfaces. Clay brick provides a welcome change to the sea of concrete in Vancouver because of its softer tactile and visual feel.

There is often more consideration for pattern in the laying of the brick. Brick, having been used as long as civilization itself, has all the attributes of a sustainable building material. Not only is it durable but also easy to recycle. Crushed recycled brick is often used as a drainage material and has become a desirable ingredient for green roof substrates in Europe. Expanded clay pellets (recycled or new) are also used for this purpose. In this day of ever increasing "faux" materials, virtual realities and global products, it is refreshing to see brick made right here in the Fraser Valley, produced from local raw materials and manufactured by local people. ■

Gailan Ngan is a potter and artist. Her ceramic work made at Sumas will be shown at Centre A, 849 Homer Street in Vancouver.

Goya Ngan is a travelling landscape architect.



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Chinatown Studios

BY INGE ROECKER & KELTY MIYOSHI MCKINNON

The moniker 'Terminal City' locates Vancouver at the end of the line; a remote and final outpost gauged by its distance from the Eastern provinces. But with the inaugural 1887 arrival of the first transcontinental train, bearing its destination in bold White letters- 'Terminal City', came the passengership 'Abyssinia' from Yokohama. This chartered vessel was reported to have carried "22 first class passengers, 80 steerage Chinese passengers, as well as cargo of mail, tea and silk headed for London". The Abyssinia launched a new trans-Pacific trade route, which was able to bypass the Suez Canal and connect China to Europe in less than 30 days.

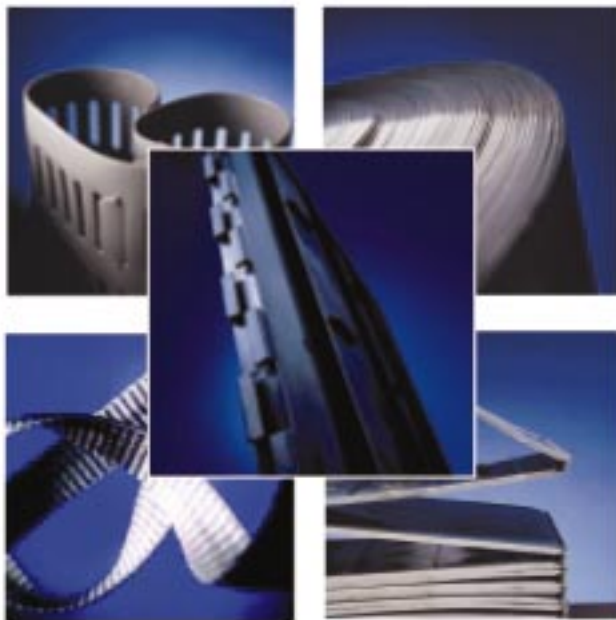
The arrival of the Abyssinia and the completion of the CPR railway facilitated massive and diverse migrations, and cultural transformations that have created a unique North American urban condition, an 'Asian City' of hybrid identities and histories. After the gold rush and railway construction migrations of the 19th century, Vancouver experienced the arrival of East Indian immigrants and the establishment of a Japanese fishing community in Steveston in the early 1900's, and recently the city has emerged as a major destination for tourists and students from Asia during the 1990's. The most current Stats Canada profile for Vancouver indicates that nearly

700,000 of the overall population of 2,000,000 are foreign-born citizens of Asian descent.

Vancouver's Chinatown absorbed much of the Chinese migrations up until 1947, when Chinese Canadians were finally granted full Canadian citizenship, and were able to freely acquire property in other parts of the city. Many local Chinese moved to the Strathcona neighbourhood due to lower property values and its proximity to Chinatown. In 1957 several large, run down areas of Chinatown were torn down and rebuilt, severely impacting the community.

The 1967 Immigration Act encouraged

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New Members

Congratulations to all new members of the British Columbia Society of Landscape Architects.

Members

Paul Cosburn 316

Katherine Dunster 320

Ron Kammeyer 317

Derek Lee 318

Stewart McIntosh 319

Alexa Uhrich 321

Jeff Vaughan 315

Charter Members

Susan Haid 322

Liane McKenna 323

Katherine Dunster

I graduated from the MLA Programme at Guelph in 1987, joined the OALA and continued on to the University of Toronto where I completed my Ph.D. in Biogeography and Plant Ecology in 1992. I am also a Registered Professional Biologist in B.C. I live and work on Bowen Island. The soul of my professional practice is conservation and includes both natural and historical/cultural landscapes, mostly on the islands in the Salish Sea. My work includes baseline biophysical inventories and impact assessments, rare species studies, and preparing ecosystem planning and management plans for both small places and very large landscapes. Most of my design work is in the area of ecosystem and wildlife habitat restoration. For the past few years I have been involved in projects trying to resolve the negative impacts of terrestrial land uses on adjacent marine ecosystems.

Susan Haid MBCSLA

is a Senior Environmental Planner at GVRD Policy and Planning. She works on environmental policy and land use planning issues, including matters related to the region's growth strategy, the Livable Region Strategic Plan and the Green Zone, as well as agricultural planning. Susan is currently working on a partnership project through the Georgia Basin Action Plan to prepare a Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the Greater Vancouver Region. Susan has been working in public sector environmental planning for the past 12 years. Her background is in Landscape Architecture (BLA), Planning (MSc) and Biology (BSc).

Alexa Uhrich MBCSLA

graduated with honours from the University of British Columbia's Landscape Architecture program in 1997 and was selected as winner of the CSLA Silver Medal for design. At Phillips Farevaag Smallenberg, where she worked until November 2002, she had the opportunity to work on a large variety of projects ranging in scale from single family residences and children's playgrounds to large scale planning projects in China. During this time, she became increasingly interested in promotional and print media design. Alexa left PFS in November 2002 to have her first baby, Dylan, born in December 2002. Since then, she has set up her own home-based practice, specializing in single family residential design as well as promotional and print media design. She also continues to work on a contract basis for PFS and other design offices in Vancouver. ■





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Chinese investors to immigrate to Vancouver, somewhat revitalizing the community, but these newcomers tended to move to suburban locations such as Richmond, where a secondary, more middle class Chinese community had been established. Despite the more disparate nature of the Chinese community today, revitalization efforts have been ongoing in Chinatown, and the community is still the largest Chinatown in Canada.

An exhibition of urban projects created by students of Landscape Architecture, History and Architecture at UBC, explores various interpretations of what makes Chinatown 'Chinatown' within the context of contemporary Vancouver. As local history has taught us, cultures cannot be viewed in isolation, for "if you keep them 'authentic', you also keep them ahistorical, nonchanging and static". By shifting the definitions of 'Terminal City', we can sense a kind of identity that begins to consider "Asian-ness or Western-ness not in a

racial sense, or in a geographical sense, but in a conceptual sense". We welcome you to visit the Chinatown Studios of UBC, presented at the Chinese Cultural Centre. ■

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BCSLA Calendar of Events

February BCSLA Credentials Committee Meeting

February December LARE Scores Released

February CLARB Region V Meeting

February 24 BCSLA Board of Directors Meeting

February 28-29 CSLA Professional Awards Adjudication, Winnipeg, MB

**March 9 Light Resource Lectures on Architecture & Design
Harry J. Webb/ UBC Lecture Series
Featuring: Claude Cormier**

March 23 BCSLA Board of Directors Meeting

April 9 LARE Candidate Order Deadline (June 2004 Sitting)

April 27 BCSLA Board of Directors Meeting

April 30 BCSLA Board of Examiners Spring Sitting (date tentative)

May 12 BCSLA Annual General Meeting (date tentative)

May CSLA Professional Awards Presentation

May 12 -14 BC Land Summit, University of BC - Vancouver

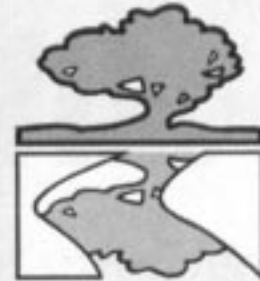
June 14-16 LARE Candidate Sitting

June 16-20 CSLA Annual General Meeting, St. John, NL

BC Land Summit Conference - May 12 to 14, 2004

This unique conference brings together professionals from a variety of land-use related professions within BC, to share ideas, network and build understanding across the different professions. The Call for Proposals is open and the deadline for submissions is November 28, 2003. Proposals for presentations and workshops are now sought from a wide range of professionals, practitioners, academics and others to make the program come alive. Interested individuals will be able to directly submit their proposals online. To download the Call for Proposals document directly, go to: www.bclandsummit.com/BCLS_proposals.pdf.

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