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Another Era for Cortes Housing

After five landmark years of diligent work with Cortes Housing Society, executive director Sandra Wood has decided to retire and spend more quality time with her family and the beauty of Cortes Island. In her place, Sadhu Johnston will take the helm. He will become our new executive director effective November 1st/2023.

Many of you will know Sadhu and his volunteer work on various island boards— but you may not know of his other impressive professional credentials. Previously, he was City Manager for the City of Vancouver where he oversaw a multitude of innovative housing initiatives such as the Vancouver Affordable Housing Agency, the establishment and expansion of the temporary modular housing program to over 1,000 units, as well as the development of thousands of other permanent affordable housing units. He has also worked closely with BC Housing and was on the board of the Street to Home Foundation.

“Housing issues are perhaps the greatest threat to the diversity, health, resilience and economic vitality of the Cortes Island community and I’m excited to have the opportunity to address those challenges. I aim to engage with the community in developing a housing strategy and action plan, including housing policy and projects to guide the work of the society over the next few years,” said Sadhu.

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Housing funding from their upcoming mid-November 2023 grant deadline. As we enter this new era, the Cortes Housing Society will be making our strongest application to date. Our vision is that we'll be selected to begin construction in 2024. Sandra will continue to assist CHS with fund-raising and grant initiatives for special projects like improving the Public Trail Network, Storm Water Management System, and Community Garden for the future residents of Rainbow Ridge.

Sandra's accomplishments have been impressive: together with local donors and loaners we raised \$1.7 million; with those funds we purchased 51 acres of raw land in Masons Landing, now known as Rainbow Ridge. With hundreds of letters of support the land was rezoned by the SRD to accommodate 24 future townhomes. Also, CHS was the Project Management team who added 4 more cottages to the CISS Seniors Village (including a new well and expanded garden courtyard). We've also completed the Rainbow Ridge architectural & infrastructure design package for all the site services including drinking water, waste water, stormwater, power, roads, and landscaping. Most recently we've expanded the public Trail System, drilled a highly productive well, and received water license approval. Thanks to her leadership, we've built a strong board of directors and staff, the CHS team is "shovel-ready" and Sandra is retirement-ready.

"I am so proud of our accomplishments in creating the Housing Society, buying land, producing seniors housing, plus getting Rainbow Ridge rezoned and ready for construction. Now I'm ready to spend more time with my beloved husband Philip, growing food together, and exploring the coast by boat. I am thrilled to be handing the baton off to new leadership," Sandra Wood said.

Going forward with Sadhu's background and skill set, the leadership of CHS is in good hands, building upon all the community has invested into making affordable housing on Rainbow Ridge a reality.

Sincere thanks,

Elizabeth Anderson, CHS President

On behalf of the Cortes Community Housing Society (CHS)

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