

The Whole Villager

Whole Village is a Sustainable Farm Community

We are a group of people from a variety of backgrounds, singles and families, who have come together to build an ecovillage, creating an ecologically and environmentally sensitive farming community based on biodynamic principles and practices.

The Whole Villager is our quarterly newsletter, designed to keep our associates and friends up to date about our project and to help them develop stronger ties with our farm community. We plan to share information regarding community living, sustainable agriculture and land stewardship to promote our mission, vision and guiding principles.

Summer
2003

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*Www.
wholevillage.org*

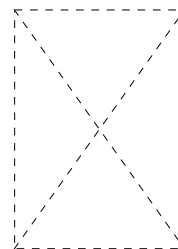
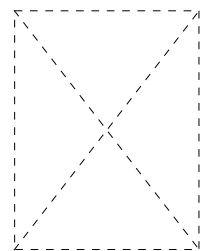
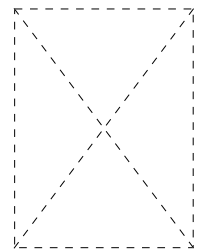
Cultivating Healthy Relationships

The most common reason cited for the failure of community projects like Whole Village is inter-personal conflict. Groups often assume that the good will of the people and a well-articulated vision of such a project will hold the community together. They don't build in ways to address the conflict that inevitably arises. When conflict erupts, the community can become mired in emotions and lose the ability to make decisions necessary to keep the project alive.

With this challenge in mind, Whole Villagers decided to put systems in place that would allow the community to tackle such conflict before it could derail the project. In the Spring of 2002, a *Community Dynamics Mandate Group* was formed, charged with supporting effective communication and conflict resolution within the community. Their formal mandate states that they will *work to encourage constructive dialogue and to prevent, recognize and address any breakdown in communication. We will be a resource to the community by providing processes and opportunities for learning about addressing differences in an open and respectful way, supporting the integrity of individuals and of the community.* This small committee meets regularly to discuss ideas, plan training events, and "take the pulse" of communications and relationships within the community.

The Community Dynamics Group initiated values clarification discussions, provided communications training, and recommended that community-building activities become a regular agenda item at the monthly meetings of the Round. They encouraged dialogue and problem solving when difficulties arose among people living in the farmhouse. Some members of the mandate group facilitate conversations between individuals who are in conflict, assisting them to articulate and address issues in a constructive fashion.

*Principle:
Talk with the
person you
are in conflict
with rather
than to a
third party.*



*Laszlo, Brenda
and Mary are pic-
tured (clockwise)*

Cultivating Healthy Relationships

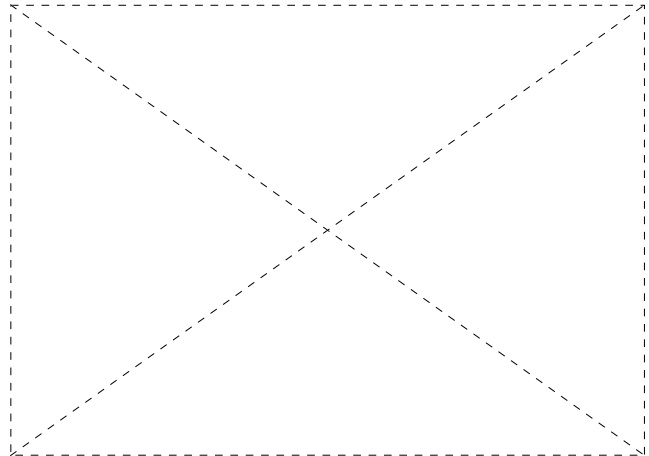
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Agnes Vandergang, a member of the Community Dynamics mandate group and a counselor by training, has facilitated communication about conflict within the group as a whole as well as between individuals. Reflecting on these experiences, Agnes indicates “we have been feeling our way through these exchanges, exploring the feelings, attitudes and behaviors that may have lead to a breakdown in communication. We are trying to ensure that differences are addressed in open and respectful ways which support the integrity of the individual as well as the community.” Members have been working to improve communication by disclosing their feelings, practicing active listening, and identifying strategies to improve day-to-day interactions.

Whole Village members agree that it’s easier to focus on tangibles like plowing fields, planting trees, building a green house, or weeding the garden, than sorting through feelings, perceptions, and patterns of behaviour. Physical tasks are straightforward, and the results are visible and immediate. Progress on the interpersonal front is slower, subtler and often painful. The lack of information and training about communication and conflict resolution in our society, and the irrationality and power of strong emotions means we are often working in the dark, looking for pinpoints of light.

This winter’s interpersonal challenges have given the community a chance to test its ability to help its members communicate more effectively and strengthen the sense of trust within the group. As a result, villagers are gaining another - more abstract - set of skills to apply to the project. Like learning to drive a tractor — these skills will also benefit the community. The group has learned that the emotional as well as the physical tasks require attention. The physical tasks get the work done, but the emotional tasks hold the community together.

Join Us at the Farm!!



The farmhouse is surrounded by a lush perennial garden

Have you attended an orientation session?

Do you want to learn more about the Whole Village project?

Are you interested in meeting the Whole Villagers?

Do you want to get more involved—see what is actually happening on the farm?

Then plan to attend one of our social events or lend a hand at one of our regular weekend work parties. You will find an up to date schedule of events on our web site at www.wholevillage.com. If you want to come out to an event, call the farm and let us know to expect you--that way we will be better able welcome you!

*But Call First
(519) 941-1099*

Whole Village Prepares to Build New Farmhouse

After two and half years of discussions with the Town of Caledon, Whole Village has finally received the go ahead to begin building a new farmhouse on the property at 20725 Shaws Creek Road. The group will be constructing a unique environmentally friendly building to house its members who intend to maintain a sustainable farm community. The proposed building conforms to Caledon's legal definition of a one-family dwelling, but at the same time allows for a mix of private and community living space.

"We are pleased that construction can finally begin and that we have received the municipal support we have been seeking for this project," states Vic Kulikauskas, President of Whole Village Ltd. "Our Vision and Founding Principles are very consistent with ecosystem goals formulated in the Town of Caledon's Official Plan. The plan includes such measures as *the promotion of appropriate ecosystem management, such as Land Trust and Land Stewardship initiatives to support these goals*. As land stewards, we look forward to cooperating with the town and local community groups who are interested in keeping Caledon green."

Getting here has been challenging. Three years ago, Whole Village approached the Town of Caledon with a proposal to build a 30 unit cohousing complex on the property. After preliminary discussions with the town and the immediate neighbors, this ambitious plan was put aside in order to avoid the arduous (and less than promising) process of seeking an amendment to the Town's Official Plan. The group decided to accommodate the housing needs of its members within the existing zoning regulations, which permit the construction of a "one-family dwelling."

Architect and Whole Village member Denis Bowman set out to clarify the definition of a one-family dwelling with Town officials in order to create a new design for the group. His best understanding of the Town's definition was that the structure should provide an equal amount of common and private space. Consequently, he produced a new drawing of a smaller structure. The new design includes one large conventional kitchen, additional common living areas (for example a living room and library) and individual bed-sitting rooms. The design ensures a balance between a shared living environment and the individuals' need for privacy.

With the new set of drawings in hand, Whole Village returned to Town officials to discuss their scaled-down plan. Villagers were hopeful that the design would receive some preliminary approval—an initial indication that a building permit would be forthcoming once they submitted the actual application. They wanted to avoid a situation in which the application, which involves a substantial fee, was turned down on the grounds that it did not meet the criteria for a one-family dwelling.

During this time, Town officials consistently refused to clarify the criteria for a one-family dwelling and yet encouraged the group to apply for a building permit. Jeff Gold, then Whole Village Project Facilitator, comments with hindsight: "We didn't want to incur the application costs, only to be turned down because we did not meet some legal criteria. As well, it seemed that the Town's unspoken concerns were political in nature rather than real planning objections; they didn't seem to trust our intentions. Presented with a unique and innovative project and building design, they chose to err on the side of caution."

"We believed that we had a legal right to live as a family and that our design did conform to zoning regulations. It appeared that the town wanted to limit Whole Village to building a conventional single family dwelling," notes Vic Kulikauskas. "We saw that as a major impasse, as the goal of developing a large sustainable farming operation requires community members to live on the property."

It was at this point that Whole Village sought legal advice. They were advised to initiate an action in Ontario Superior Court in order to seek a ruling on the matter. They were told that the Town would be obliged to comply with a legal ruling from this court. This gave them the confidence to invest in this course of action as

they felt that the court would decide in their favor.

They retained a lawyer to present their case, which was finally heard on March 18, 2003.

Part of the proceedings involved a cross examination of one of the Town planners by the Whole Village Lawyer. When asked directly whether the proposed farmhouse design was a plan for a one-family home, the response was a clear “yes.” This was the answer Whole Village was hoping to hear and it cleared the way for a favorable ruling. The judge supported Whole Village’s right to build the proposed farmhouse on the property and to live as a community in the unique “one-family farmhouse.”

While the ruling was initially seen as a victory for the group, it took another two months before the actual

“writ” was drafted to the satisfaction of the Town’s lawyer (The writ is the document that clarifies the judge’s ruling). However, this documentation was completed in early June, and now Town officials have begun to cooperate with Whole Village in earnest. The way is finally clear to move forward with the building.

Looking back over the past two years, Vic says, “It was a battle worth fighting. Our intention has been consistent: to provide housing to individuals working on our sustainable farming and land stewardship project. We are very pleased to at last have local support for our vision of community and to be ready to break ground on this exciting project!”

Making Global Connections

By Brenda Dolling

May 25, 2003 was a pleasant spring day and the beginning of a very special long distance relationship. Whole Villagers had given little thought to the practical realization of one part of our vision which states that *we commit ourselves to the development of economic, political and cultural connections with our neighbours, our community and the world as a whole.* Yet through my connections with a colleague and friend who leads educational trips to central America, we were introduced to members of the Durika Ecovillage from Costa Rica.

Whole Village was one of many stops made by the four members of the Costa Rican Community, who were on a short Canadian fundraising tour. The goal of their fundraising is to buy land for the creation of an 11,500 acre biological reserve in the Talamanca Mountains of southern Costa Rica.

On their stop at Whole Village, John McKillop introduced the Durika Community, with an amazing slide

presentation. Whole Villagers were awed by slides showing breathtaking views of mountain scenery, exotic birds and animals and community life. Next, the Durika members spoke of their fourteen years of experience on the land.

During this time they have increased sparse soil in depth and fertility for organic gardening, constructed simple dwellings on steep mountainsides and husbanded goats. Their conservation projects include educational programs, reforestation projects and the creation of a biological reserve. They offer educational workshops that vary from the identification of medicinal plants to martial arts, nutrition, survival skills and forest fire prevention.

Durika is concerned that the culture of the local Cabecar Indian population is endangered. They help preserve it through joint projects like the recording of customs, improvement of living conditions and sharing of health care resources.

As a result of our discussions, the Durika members offered support for our organic farming enterprise. Invitations were exchanged on both sides to visit and work together. It is hoped that this meeting will be the beginning of an exciting, mutually beneficial relationship between two ecovillages with similar principles. And, as winter approaches in Canada, Whole Villagers may be even more motivated to visit this inspiring model of community—our first global connection!