

THE HORNBY WAY



Canada Day on Hornby 2019

This booklet (originally created in 2006 and updated in 2019) is a publication of HIRRA, the island's local association of residents and property owners. It arose from a need, perceived by the Executive, for an overview of the mechanics and the spirit of local governance and "how things work" on Hornby. This includes the branches of local government, the networks of island associations, and the unique possibilities and responsibilities offered by island life in a small community.

THE HORNBY WAY: A GUIDE

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Introduction

Population

 Hornby's People

 Areas of Concern: Housing

 Water and Septic

 Other: Policing, Respect for the Land and Beaches

 Shopping on Hornby

Application of Values

 Conflict and Resolution

 Community Vision

Levels of Governance: Links

Introduction

The Hornby Way was first published as a booklet by the Hornby Island Residents and Ratepayers Association (HIRRA). It arose from a need, perceived by the Executive, for an overview of the mechanics and the spirit of local governance and “how things work” on Hornby (in 2006). This included the branches of local government, the networks of island associations, and the unique possibilities and responsibilities offered by island life in a small community.

This revision and re-issue of *The Hornby Way* (2019) takes into consideration at least some of the many changes that have taken place since the original publication, as well as the issues with which the Hornby Island community is grappling at this moment. The basic premise underlying this version of *The Hornby Way* is that we have a complex society in miniature which depends on all parts of that society cooperating with and supporting one another.

Hornby Island's People

Hornby Island is both a home and a destination, a place where people live normal lives with all their attendant struggles and, at the same time, a magical place where people come to decompress, spend time with friends and family, enjoy music and art and, most especially, to spend time in a natural environment of hiking trails and beautiful beaches.

Roughly speaking, the population of this island consists of four major groups, two are year-round and two are part-time. Year-round residents include owners and renters. One of the many unique characteristics of the island's community is that we call our local governing body the Hornby Island Residents and Ratepayers Association, giving equal status both to those who pay their property taxes directly and those who pay them as part of their rent. Seasonal residents include those who own second homes on the island and those who come for a visit, staying with local residents or in short term rentals, beds and breakfasts, and campgrounds. Another of the characteristics of the island's community is a conscious effort to achieve a harmonious relationship among all four of these groupings.

As a destination, year-round residents know that the island's economic well-being depends on the influx of visitors and second home owners which occurs primarily in the summers and now also in the shoulder seasons. On the other hand, seasonal visitors and residents depend on the year-round community to produce the art and music they enjoy, staff the eating establishments, clean and prepare the rental houses, and, in general, provide a welcoming atmosphere. Year-round residents tend to the business of the island so that the Co-op store remains viable, land use is overseen, the fire department is prepared for emergencies (of which there are many every year), trails are maintained, businesses are supported, our community school flourishes, and medical and support services are functioning. Seasonal visitors and residents support Hornby's artists and farmers by attending the twice-weekly summer markets, attending concerts, eating at cafes, restaurants, bakeries, and pizza locations, renting bicycles, and enjoying the simple pleasures of walking, cycling, and swimming.

Maintaining this complex, multi-faceted partnership requires constant attention on keeping the relationship among these groups harmonious. Most year-round residents intuitively understand that even though physical separation between neighbours may be greater than in the city, they live in closer psychological quarters. The same neighbour who may seem a nuisance on one day is a godsend when one is obliged to call for help of some sort.

Many Hornby residents left behind city and suburb in favour of a more relaxed and informal lifestyle. These include craftspeople, artists, those who can work from home, young families, and retirees. To them, Hornby offers relative peace, quiet, freedom, and self-sufficiency, as well as more real-time contact with friends and neighbours: direct, friendly, caring and respectful. Life on Hornby seeks to balance a rural experience of nature and personal freedom with a satisfying sense of community and belonging. While these experiences may be typical in many small communities, they are intensified here by the literal fact of being on a small island: “the rock” does not lie along the road to anywhere else, and the drawbridge goes up at the end of the day. Police are only present during the summer (and on call when needed the rest of the year); it is our neighbours and friends who are the trained volunteers who come to our aid in case of medical, fire, or other emergencies, just as they also are the ones to respond to emergencies among summer visitors.¹ Year-round Hornby residents have a strong sense of self-reliance coupled with an appreciation of mutual dependence and responsibility for each other which transcends liking and disliking. In some ways, Hornby residents are like a clan or an extended family, with diverse subcultures and networks of relationships that may only partially overlap. Therefore, while one may see the same faces daily or weekly at the Co-op, it is also likely that one may meet someone “new” who’s been a fellow islander for twenty years!

In an urban setting, it’s easier to believe that what you do is inconsequential. With so many people in close proximity, measuring the effects of individual choices is difficult. On Hornby, individual actions have noticeable effects on the people around you – whether or not it is this island that you call home. And these effects are not only on others, but on yourself as well. A summer visitor who is rude in one setting may find that their actions have become known to others. They are then less gracious toward this person who in turn tells others that “Hornby is unfriendly to visitors.”

In this situation of mutual dependence, we want our neighbours to prosper and to wish us well. We who live on Hornby year round want our second home owners and visitors to enjoy their time on the island and return often. In turn, we hope that second home owners and visitors want us to prosper and will respect the values and aspirations which are expressed in the community vision.²

1. In July and August of 2018, there were a total of 49 incidents which required 437.5 hours of mostly volunteer time, as well as lost wages.

2. <http://hirra.ca/hornby/hornby-island-community-vision-statements/>

AREAS OF CONCERN FOR YEAR-ROUND RESIDENTS: HOUSING

There was a time in the recent past when Hornby was truly isolated and land prices reflected that isolation. As its popularity as a vacation destination grew, many people began to purchase land and build vacation and retirement homes. The price of land grew exponentially, putting ownership out of the reach of many of the people who would like to make Hornby their year-round home. Ninety per-cent of new home buyers do not choose to live on Hornby Island while Hornby Island has a very high level of both adult and child poverty in the Comox Valley Regional District.³ The average home price is presently over half a million dollars. Though the original subdivisions established in the 1970's were designed for seasonal recreation purposes and modest cabins, they have increasingly become both year-round residences and the sites of larger homes. This may reflect a shift in priorities from coming to Hornby to enjoy nature to matching the kind of accommodation being left behind in the city. Not only does this trend increase the cost of housing, but it also changes land use as well as water and septic concerns. This means that host community members are having an increasingly difficult time finding housing, either to buy or to rent. This has led to the loss of many of our younger residents as they leave the island to find secure and affordable housing. This exodus, in turn, puts at risk our ability to host summer visitors and the viability of our school and pre-school.

Some of the housing shortage may be alleviated when the Beulah Creek project is built. At this writing (2019), this is at least two years in the future, provided no further impediments emerge. This means that there will continue to be a shortage of secure rental housing into the foreseeable future. People with second buildings on their properties might want to consider renting to responsible individuals or families who could also serve as caretakers.⁴

3. See <https://cvcfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/Comox-Valley-Vital-Signs-Source-Report.pdf>; pp. 55-57.

4. At this writing, Hornby provides a confidential way to match landlords and tenants by contacting Daniel Siegel (rebdan@telus.net) as well helping to develop rental agreements and providing fair witness to such agreements.

WATER AND SEPTIC

On Hornby, the flow of water into and from housing is the responsibility of the people who are living on a property. All the water used on Hornby comes from the rain that falls on the island.⁵ That flow of water is limited, especially in the summer months when the largest number of people are on the island and there is little or no rain. Year-round residents encourage summer visitors to be sensitive to this situation and use water sparingly. Our local Islands Trust bylaws are in place to protect our precious water resources, including healthy ground water, and need to be followed. Septic fields are overtaxed when more people stay in a house than the field is designed to serve and year-round residents, local property managers, summer visitors and vacation home rental owners are required to stay within the limits set by our local Bylaws. Remember that thoughtless actions have consequences that impact others.

OTHER CONCERNS

While it is true that Hornby is only policed in the summer, this does not mean that anything goes in the way of behaviour. Sound carries in the quiet of our nights (remember that Hornby doesn't have the background noise of a city). Loud parties, barking dogs, car sound systems, and yelling on the streets can be heard by people trying to sleep, including those who need to be awake [early] in the morning to bake, make pizza, open the Co-op and other Ringside businesses, work on construction or having been out late on an emergency call. Fires outside designated beach fire pits and close to homes are especially unnerving to year-round residents and summer home owners alike, and we urge extreme caution, especially as we experience warmer and drier summers.

In some instances, Hornby Island is a landing spot for vulnerable people because of our tolerant and caring attitudes. We take a proactive stance on mental health issues. In the last decade we have progressed far ahead of many similar communities in establishing protocols and procedures to deal with people who find themselves in psychological distress. We're not there yet, but we have a lot to be proud of, and our progress reflects a community collaboration in addressing the problem.

5. There is a rumour that some of Hornby's water comes under the salt water and from the mountains on Vancouver Island. This is not true according to the water experts we have consulted who agree unanimously that rain provides all of Hornby's water.

Hornby is blessed with several beaches which invite residents and visitors alike to swim, enjoy the sun and sand and the company of friends and relatives. In the recent past, we have experienced large parties, big fires, and lots of alcohol on these same beaches. We worry about people who are intoxicated wandering into the woods and passing out or going into the water and drowning, both of which have occurred in the past. Broken glass and garbage have also been issues in the past (garbage remains one today). Again, Hornby residents and second home owners strongly encourage everyone to be sensitive to their impact on others by refraining from drinking alcohol on the beaches (which is against the law) and by not bringing liquid refreshments to the beach in glass containers.

SHOPPING ON HORNBY

Most, if not all Hornby businesses must manage carefully to avoid operating at a loss outside of the summer season. Their ability to remain open during the fall, winter, and early spring months, even if only part-time, depends on their local and visitor clientele. We encourage those who come in the summer to shop at the Co-op, Ringside, Ford Cove, and markets for food rather than bringing it all with you. The same is true for our specialty shops and food establishments. It is not only that summer patronage is what makes these businesses viable; it also means that individual people can earn enough in the summer to get them through the long offseason and the many students who come to Hornby to work in the summer (including many who were raised on Hornby) can earn enough so that they can continue their education. Despite rumours to the contrary, Hornby residents work very hard, especially in the summers, and our skilled tradespeople work overtime responding to calls for assistance with plumbing, electrical issues, construction and renovation projects.

THE HORNBY WAY: CONFLICTS AND THEIR RESOLUTION

Hornby Island is incredibly beautiful and many of the people who live here aspire to a life in which professed values are actualized in daily living. Still, this is not (yet) paradise and residents and visitors both have their share of disagreements and conflicts. There are times when involving the RCMP, social services, and even the courts are the best ways for deep conflicts to be resolved. However, given the absence of a police presence year round and the logistical difficulties of having to go to Vancouver Island, Hornby residents have taken steps to work through difficult situations and relationships locally.

HIRRA meetings are conducted according to the HIRRA Guide to the Etiquette of Meetings which has dramatically improved meeting deliberations by focusing on issues rather than persons and showing respect for each person's right to express their opinions. In cases of conflict between staff and volunteer committees or within committees, HIRRA has also established a mediation protocol which can be invoked before an escalation that involves district and provincial entities.⁶

COMMUNITY VISION

In the summer of 2003, a visioning process begun over a year earlier resulted in the publication of "The Hornby Island Community Vision." It was intended to describe the Hornby Island community in the year 2020 and began with an expression of shared values, followed by how those values would be implemented. The statement articulated that we would remove the island from dependence on fossil fuels, create affordable housing, encourage the building of smaller, energy efficient homes, diversify the local economy and increase the amount of food grown on the island. The vision statement also included a section on conflict resolution, focused on values and local means of helping disputants.⁷

As noted above, Hornby provides a confidential mediation service for disputes between owners and renters as well as for those in interpersonal conflicts of other kinds and is presently exploring a connection with the Comox Valley Community Justice Centre which helps in providing restorative justice solutions to more serious issues.

APPLICATION OF OUR VALUES

On Hornby, we have the opportunity to forge a model for participation, respectful process, and self-determination that could work even in communities that do not benefit from our insularity.

Whenever possible, year-round Hornby residents seek consensus rather than simple majority votes. While consensus is more difficult to achieve, it is also a more satisfying and stable basis for community decisions. When there is solid community support for an idea, it tends to go forward and even dissenters feel better when where there has been adequate chance for them to express their opinions and to have these respectfully heard.

6. Both these documents can be found here: <http://hirra.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/HIRRA-Constitution-bylaws-and-policies-compilation-June-2018.pdf>

7. The community vision can be downloaded from : <http://hirra.ca/hornby/hornby-island-community-vision-statements/>

One recent example is the process by which a site for a new arts centre was chosen. The board and staff of the Hornby Island Arts Council (HIAC) initially asked the community to consider a site very close to the community hall. It was clear that, despite a small majority of support for the concept, there was also significant resistance to the choice of location. Rather than push ahead with this official majority, a month later, HIAC presented another option which they knew would have support, and it was approved with 96% approval in time to meet a deadline for a grant application.

There is also a growing sense on the island that future development and growth depends on increased collaboration. The rising costs of building and land are encouraging the creation of groups such as The Spark and public spaces like the Arts Centre, endeavors that will offer opportunities for people to work on projects, repair tools and equipment, have a dedicated art gallery and perhaps even shared studio space. There is already a dedicated yoga facility (Sun Door Yoga) and a discussion is underway to link all the facilities on the land between the school and Joe King Park.

The Hornby Community Fund represents another example of a wide range of residents (year round and seasonal) working together for the future of the community. Money is raised locally (fund raising dinners, collectibles sales, book sales, bequests, donations, etc.) for a capital fund, with the annual interest paid to local applicant non-profit groups. As members of all our populations work together to increase the capital in the Fund, the benefits for all of us who love Hornby will also increase and help to ensure Hornby's financial stability and continuing success in perpetuity.

Our recycling program was one of the earliest in the Province and continues to be a model. The recycling depot is comprehensive and includes a free store, compost, and a recycling building on the way to the "absolute" garbage containers and the hazardous materials drop off. It is a living example of the motto "reduce, reuse, recycle." Of particular interest is the way the recycling depot encourages Hornby residents to reduce the waste stream by buying recycled products and avoiding "disposables" such as diapers and single use plastics.⁸ Recent steps in encouraging the movement toward sustainable energy consumption include the solar project on the roof of the free store. At present, Hornby Islanders participate in recycling 70% of its waste and sends only 30% of the waste stream to off-island landfills.⁹

8. See <https://www.hirra.ca/recycle/>.

9. More about the free store: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-gZfUNV2Jwo>

For Hornby Island to be all that it has been and what it aspires to be requires the participation of all four of our populations. Everyone needs to experience and share the values which energize our organizations and our individual residents. Everyone needs to be sensitive about water use and conservation, the size of new houses, using the recycling depot, walking, cycling, or riding our new summer bus service rather than driving whenever possible. Even more important, year round residents hope that summer visitors will appreciate the effort it takes to keep these systems operational and ready to accommodate the influx of thousands of summer visitors.

At the same time, Hornby Island as presently situated not only in space but in time, appreciates the opportunity to share this beautiful spot with others whose time on the island supports the artists, craftspeople, food preparers, and the many others whose significant contributions to the island's society and economy may be less visible.

It is only by realizing the goal of increased collaboration and respect that Hornby will continue to be both the home and holiday destination that it is now.

LEVELS OF GOVERNANCE AND ORGANIZATION: LINKS

[Comox Valley Regional District](#)

[Islands Trust](#)

[Hornby Island Residents' and Ratepayers' Association](#)

[Hornby Island Community Economic Enhancement Corporation](#)

[The Hornby and Denman Community Health Care Society](#)

[Hornby Island Medical Clinic](#)

[Hornby Island Arts Council](#)

[Elder Housing and Hornby Island Housing Society](#)

[Hornby Island Educational Society](#)

[Conservancy Hornby Island](#)

[Hornby Water Stewardship Project](#)

[Hornby Community Fund](#)