

# The new normal...Salt Spring style

For a small community, Salt Spring definitely rose to the occasion when covid-19 arrived. Essential services were allowed to remain open in the ten week closure period (starting on March 12). People did stay home, they did check on neighbours, they did try to shop early if older, and only once a week...many immediately wore masks. Social distancing was maintained. Hand-washing and sanitizers were regularly done. Everyone was suddenly trying zoom and other online protocols for stay at home communications. Salt Spring is a very caring island, underneath all that interesting opinion on any specific subject...people did want the best and were following Dr Bonnie Hen-

ry's edict of be calm, be kind, be safe. Throughout stages 1 & 2, the number of cases in Vancouver Island Health remained small (the Gulf Islands are a part of VIHA). Stage 3 encouraged stay-cation travel opportunities, the B.C. Ferries reinstated routes and scheduling, and travel was underway to the smaller recreational/secondary home communities. Salt Spring saw visitors during the July/August season. A covid version of the Saturday Market in the Park started up at end of July (social distancing, masks, fewer vendors). ArtCraft did open up at end of June, also with covid protocols in place (social distancing

required). Restaurants and coffee stops and even pubs managed to offer sit-in/sit-down, not just take-out, also with social distancing measures clearly in place. Wait staff wore masks and sanitizer was available everywhere. Schools will be returning, but also online options will be maintained...parents will decide what to do. This may still be a hiatus version of life and not the true "new normal". The online world is here, though.



*"Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness" (Ode to Autumn, by John Keats).*

## Next steps?

That 10 week closure after March 12 had the outcome of making city dwellers decide to become rural/secondary home owners. The Vancouver market had a jumpstart in activity, and those sellers fanned out around the coast and the

interior communities, seeking a softer lifestyle, in smaller towns. Previously, Salt Spring and the Gulf Islands attracted recreational buyers...not living here full-time. These new buyers, almost all from Vancouver, are planning to live

here and so they interview the Island, too. If they don't "buy" the Island, then they will not buy the home on it. A two-step dance, more profoundly than at other times. More info? Call me. Lack of inventory is the big thing right now.


### Fall pleasures on Salt Spring :

- Covid style Saturday Market in the Park.
- Tuesday Farmers Market.
- Farmgate stands, cider tastings, craft brewery, wine tastings.
- Gallery openings.
- Virtual Fall Fair.
- Harvest menus at the great restaurants.

## Real Estate Markets rebound?

Real estate markets are rarely in an equilibrium moment...they are like all markets, highly responsive to buyer reactions. Sellers and realtors do not create markets...buyers do that. If a buyer wants to buy, then a market can become a sellers market...this simply means that there are fewer listings and many buyers wanting to act. If a buyer does not want to buy, then we find ourselves in a buyers market...which simply means lots of listings and not many buyers around. Often, this leads to a cycle of price reductions. A sellers market can lead to price stability and to eventual escalation in pricings. It's all based on that economic adage about supply and demand. No one foresaw the eruption of interest in rural regions, though, post-



Time to enjoy the harvest pleasures of Fall....

covid shut-down. During that ten week closure period, after March 12, there was a strong round of inquiries from people, perhaps initially using the MLS and other sites as entertainment. The longer the closure lasted, though, with people stuck at home in cities, there began to be a serious interest in suburbs and in rural areas.

As soon as ferries reinstated routes and sailing schedules, and it became possible for people to do a daytrip to Salt Spring, the activity erupted. Immediately, the entry level priced residential homes began to sell off. Towards the end of July/beginning of August, we saw the start of the higher end residential sales. Undeveloped land remains a slower sale, as the buyers, mainly from Vancouver, have sold a house and need a house...not a building project. As inventory continues to thin out, however, and people want to move to Salt Spring as their principal residence, they will buy land and consider building. There are so many possibilities now in construction methods...ask me about this. 21st Century? Yes!

## What about that online world?

Well, it's different. Aristotle, that savvy Ancient Greek, reminded us that we are social animals. That seems to imply that we are visibly close to each other, that we may like to move around in groups, that our conversations and interactions are the spark plugs for our well-being. I once read an article on Steve Jobs and the lovely smart-phone. Yes, it holds the world search in the palm of our hands,

but it's also an isolating thing. Just watch people sitting near to each other, and they are all on their devices, busy communicating, yes, but in isolation. So, extrapolate out. The online world might just be a big smart phone. Experience, but in isolation. Hmm.... Well, back in the 1970s,

that savvy philosopher Marshall McLuhan came up with the tag line "the medium is the message". Time to think about what he meant, perhaps? If we are busy connecting online, digesting what the search comes up with, are we more likely to be manipulated by the platform? Hmm.

*In change lies opportunity.*

## Virtual world means?

It seems to be about observing, one step removed from the "actual". One observes a documentary on parks. Or, one is actually walking in a park. They are different experiences. It's not about good or not good. It's just different. Will we become a society of observers if we turn to an online/virtual world? In a zoom or other online platform meeting, people speak, taking turns, and so the communication seems to be more of a

lecture format. One is not so aware of expression, or body language, or interruptive moments...the back and forth of a regular face to face meeting is missing. Again, it's neither good nor not good...it's just different. Does a lecture format mean the loss of a certain kind of interaction that we might



*Crisp evenings, starwatching, warm afternoons...Fall can hold late summer in its grasp.*

have found in a face to face meeting? Does it mean that serendipity discovery is lost? Hmm....hard to say. Too soon to say in this process of virtual communication. As humans, though, we quickly get used to change and then the "now" becomes totally accepted...and acceptable. It's just different.

# Things to do and to enjoy on a Gulf Island

Salt Spring and the Gulf Islands are protected spaces...the Islands Trust, a government body created in 1974, ensured that these Gulf Islands would be preserved as their beautiful park-like selves, for the benefit of all B.C. residents. Growth is strictly controlled by severe zoning/bylaws. Zonings were put in place in 1974. The natural world has been preserved and the Islands float in the midst of the Salish Sea. Lots to do and to see. Hike/walk the many trails. Sail, kayak, paddle board to beaches and to bays/coves...explore (its called gunkholing the Gulf Islands). Enjoy the farmers markets and the farmgate stands...amazing organic produce here. Wine tastings (3 award winning wineries), cider tastings, craft

brewery, cheese-makers delight, decks and patios for al fresco dining (our superb restaurants feature local ingredients), so a foodie experience is definitely a winner. Authentic artists community...see the studios, enjoy the Ganges Galleries,



Warm soups, fire in the hearth, a mystery story to involve...

check out ArtCraft in the season, and also the ArtSpring offerings. Live music venues around the town. There is a rich and inspiring cultural life on Salt Spring...it's a year-round lifestyle. Alternative health opportunities, yoga studios, meditation retreats, an excellent hospital, one's health and wellness is cared for here. Lots of interesting things to connect with your enthusiasms, but it's also a place that allows one to finish that novel or to create that opera. Time is an interesting thing. There is time on Salt Spring and the Gulf Islands, and yet people often say they become more engaged/busy when they get here. Hmmm..... More information on the delectable offerings of the Gulf Islands? Call me.

## Day Trip Ideas?

Salt Spring offers three separate ferry routes: from Long Harbour to Tsswagan in Vancouver. From Fulford to Swartz Bay in Victoria. From Vesuvius to Crofton in mid-Vancouver Island. There are also two floatplane companies with regular scheduled service (Harbour Air and Seair). They fly to Vancouver downtown, to Vancouver Airport, to Maple Bay. Check it out! Love to ski?

It's an easy trip to Mt Washington near Courtenay on Vancouver Island. Like to check out museums and other galleries? Easy to get to Victoria for some further adventures. Enjoy the foodie options available in nearby Cowichan Bay. Seeking a beach where the tide

*"A poor life this, if full of care,  
We have no time to stand and  
stare". (W.H. Davies)*

goes out forever? An easy visit to Parksville's Rath Trevor Beach is in your future. Vancouver Island is on the doorstep of Salt Spring, and so easy-peasy to get there...but also oh so nice to return to our little island paradise. Suggestions for where to dine? Ask for "Li's List".

## Investment buys?

Real Estate, over time, has proved to be an excellent investment. It is not liquid, and if one has to sell in a down market, then one might lose any cushion of investment that one had hoped for. If one sells on an uptrend, then one can often realize an excellent return. It is a market, just like the stock market, and there are bulls and bears periods in real estate ownership, too. The old adage that you make your money when you buy is actu-

ally a worthy truism. What makes an investment on a Gulf Island a little different? That Islands Trust non-growth preservation policy, in place since 1974, and strictly adhered to, does mean that over time there will always be less inventory. Tie that to the normal market fluctuations of a sellers/buyers market scenario, and one can see that there will be a potential uptick if one can "hold". That's the key. For a buyer, if one sees

a likely property prospect, it's important to realize that there won't be a lot of comparables. If a property goes "ping" for you, then it's important to act. They all seem to be "one-offs" on a Gulf Island.



Shorter days...a cocooning into ourselves....Fall's message.