

January 2018 Report to the Five Oaks Membership

The Vision and Mission of Five Oaks

Vision To be a sacred place where peoples of all faiths as well as spiritual seekers can gather in community to live, work, learn, pray, play, heal and act for justice.

Mission To be a sacred place where people, as individuals or in intentional community, come apart to look deeply into their own lives and the world in light of faith and values, and find their calling to participate in Spirit's healing work in creation.

To provide a residential setting where people of different faiths or no faiths, cultures, Nations and spiritual seekers can explore new understandings of neighbour, faith and the earth and model communities of compassion for the sake of the world.

Partnerships

Five Oaks started out in June 2017 with two full partners, two program partners and three business partners and ended the year with one full partner, one governance partner, two program partners (and growing) and possibly seven business partners.

Full Partners: Six Nations made a generous financial contribution of support and as a result, a number of Six Nations programs are developing an ongoing relationship with Five Oaks. One example is the Warriors Camp program held four times a year for First Nations young people to be on the land, learn their tradition and find healing and strength in their identity. Christian and other groups attending Five Oaks at the same time as Six Nations groups have had opportunities to engage with one another as friends and fellow citizens of creation. Renée Thomas-Hill and Rhonda Johns contribute their valuable perspective to the deliberations of the Board.

A youth Muslim/Christian camp enabled young people to get to know one another and each other's faith and cultural traditions. Muslim young adults held a large camp here as well. We expect both to happen again in 2018. Two members of the Muslim community are part of the Five Oaks Board, Ausma Malik and Imam Tarek. Imam Tarek's wisdom and leadership contribute to our worship and subsequent learning at every board meeting. Though the anticipated funding has not yet come through, we continue to work in a governance and program partnership with the Muslim community.

Program Partners: Plans for the first year of the three-year School of Celtic Consciousness (July 3 – 9, 2018) with John Philip Newell of Heartbeat, our program partner, are underway. Five Oaks continues our partnership with Emmanuel College, hosting the Ministry Supervision course (Apr 30 – May 4). The Courage to Lead program with Mardi Tindal and other resource leaders is continuing our working relationship. Five Oaks continues conversations with the YMCA and the GO Project who are each discerning whether the Centre can be an

option for their day camps this summer. Other possible program partners are deliberating their next steps.

Business Partners: Our original business partners were: Grand River Bookstore, Grand River Rafting and The Kitchen. Their presence and involvement attract and serve communities in the area as well as participants in our programs. People love the food served at The Acorn Café and they delight in our beautiful site. GROWE (Grand River Outdoor Wilderness Education) and Ageless Yoga have since joined us. This is an unexpected area of growth - supporting young people starting out in small businesses that particularly encourage wellness and care of the earth. In fact, Five Oaks is beginning to look like a hub for this kind of social enterprise.

Do you have any comments or suggestions to make on these developments so far? Do these partnerships fulfill our mission?

Can you recommend any Muslim philanthropists or organizations that might be willing to support our mission financially?

Can you suggest any other potential full, program or business partners?

Staff

Who they are and what they do:

- **Michael Shewburg**, our Operations Manager since August 2017, has done an excellent job of putting operational processes in place to make for ease of booking, tracking reservations, cleaning, decorating, oversight of the whole site and much more. He is the one who has attracted our new business partners—and is full of ideas for the future. His promotion of our interfaith/intercultural mission has attracted a number of faith groups to come to Five Oaks and make it home—if only for a few days.
- **Jessica MacGregor** is provided much need assistance working part time in the office to provide effective help with administration due to increased bookings
- **Pat Bowlby**, our part-time Financial Administrator, provides clear financial statements so that the Board knows exactly where it stands financially. She is also preparing for a full audit which will make it possible for the Centre to seek grants from more organizations.
- **Sharon Hull**, Oaten Institute Administrator, works on contract to look after all the details of organizing programs
- **Colleen Beaudin, Rayleen McPhee** and **Christie Tisdale** our contract housekeepers, are in the process of giving the Centre a much-needed thorough housecleaning.
- We sadly said farewell in December to **Tom Hunt** who retired as Maintenance and Grounds Coordinator.
- Thanks to the hard work of the Human Resources Task Group and help from Diane Matheson Jimenez of Hamilton Conference, **Dave Bancroft** was employed to carry on this work. He is already industriously applying his years of experience in maintenance work.
- Although she was not formally a staff member, Five Oaks supporters acknowledge the generous contribution made to the mission of the Centre

by **Jackie Childerhose**, Manager of Grand River Spiritual and Educational Resources. She died on December 13 and will be so deeply missed.

Decision re: Staffing Model: The business plan stated that the Board would consult with the membership in January 2018 about staffing models, including the possibility of an Executive Director and/or Program staff if appropriate. The Board will be considering staffing possibilities at its January 14 meeting and will have more to report to you in the online meetings on January 23 and 31. The board continues to explore financial and volunteer resources and remains open to innovative ways to increase the staff complement, generate income, and live into the vision and mission.

What wisdom would you give us about hiring staff at this point in time?

Volunteers/Working Teams

Eight working teams support the work of the staff and Board. These include the following: Communications, Finance, Fund-Raising and Donor Development, Governance and Policy, Operations, Partnership, Program, and Property. It is inspiring that thirty-six volunteers are willing to give their time and skill towards the management of Five Oaks in this interim time of development. We are seeing some excellent results. For example, the Operations Team has implemented a number of operational efficiencies; the Finance Team is continually working at clarity in financial reports; and the Fund-Raising and Donor Development Team is researching appropriate funding sources.

A number of volunteers come out faithfully during the week and share freely of their time and talents, helping with maintenance, housekeeping, decorating and administrative tasks. They seem to enjoy themselves in the process. The Centre is very appreciative. You are always welcome to come and be part of the Five Oaks family for one-time work session or on a regular basis.

What is your observation of the functioning of the working teams?

This is a very brief description. What would you like to learn more about?

Would you be interested in serving on any of these teams or know of anyone who might? The Communications and Program teams would especially welcome more volunteers.

Program

The original vision was that each of the full partners would offer a set of programs to respond to the needs of their own constituency; then they would work together to create interfaith programs. Presently, our Six Nations partner is offering some of their own programs. The Oaten Institute is continuing to offer programs that were in place before the change in direction such as NEOS, youth and confirmation retreats, and Licensed Lay Worship Leadership training. The Luther Legacies program was very well attended and received in late October. The Centre would like to continue this model of program which is developed and

promoted by its own leaders. The program team is exploring and booking further new Five Oaks events, as noted in the Program Partners section.

The Partnership Team is connecting with interfaith groups and working on potential interfaith programs—especially in light of the upcoming Parliament of World Religions to be held in Toronto in the fall of 2018.

The Board continues to reflect on the future direction of programming.

What do you think of the three-streamed programming concept – Christian/seeker (i.e. Oaten Institute), Muslim, Six Nations?

Do you have any suggestions for program offerings under the Oaten Institute? Under Six Nations?

Do you know of anyone who might be interested in helping with programming for the Muslim community?

What programs would you attend at Five Oaks?

Property

Here is what the Operations and Property Working Teams are proposing at the moment for capital improvements. This will be discussed at the January Board meeting and the results will be shared in the online meetings

The proposed 2018 budget for capital improvements is \$100,000. The funds would be used in two stages. The first would be to obtain quotes for necessary changes to:

- Water system: Pipes and source of water. It may be necessary to drill a new well
- Upgrade the Summer Centre to make it more functional for large groups. This would include upgraded kitchen, winterization and stable foundation. Improving the cabins and outdoor washrooms would be part of a multiyear project.
- Full retrofit of the Upper Room space, including a redesigned front doorway and increased floor space and storage.
- Upgrade House on the Hill: Deck needs repair; painting, carpets, siding and soffits would make this home more appealing.

The Partnership Team is also consulting about a possible new location for the chapel in the Star Classroom and ways to make it intercultural/interfaith.

How would you set these items in priority?

What might you add or remove from this list?

General comments?

Finances

Cash, grants, gifts, donations: Five Oaks Centre ended 2017 with \$326,656. cash on hand. We owe General Council \$75,000. which was loaned to the Centre to help with severances and the cost of closing. This is our only debt and it will be dealt with this year.

Brant Community Foundation provided a \$6,000. grant for the purchase of a yurt for outdoor camping. Seeds of Hope, part of the United Church organization, EDGE, granted \$5,000. for promotion of our new mission. The Centre has also applied for a grant to assist with the construction of a purification lodge on the property.

The Centre received close to \$20,000. in bequests and gifts in kind. Donations and PAR givings up to this point come to a total of approximately \$82,000. All financial gifts are valued. Thanks for your donations.

The statistics show one hundred and ninety-seven contributors to Five Oaks in 2017. Of those fifty-eight were \$99.00 or less; sixty-three were in the range of \$100 to \$199; thirty were in the range of \$200 to \$299; five were in the range of \$300 to \$399; six were in the range of \$400 to \$499; fifteen were in the range of \$500 to \$999; and twenty donated \$1,000 or more. The purpose of sharing this data is to help you to consider whether you can take a step-up in your donation to Five Oaks in 2018

Three Faith Bonds were received for \$30,000. There is considerable potential for this financial instrument—especially if we undertake major capital upgrades.

Board members currently haven't had time to promote Faith Bonds fully.

Bay of Quinte Conference generously returned their 2016 donation of \$75,000.

Five Oaks had sent back this gift when it appeared the Centre might close. A letter has been sent out to encourage conferences, presbyteries and congregations to consider a legacy gift to Five Oaks.

Income: This all looks very positive, even remarkable—and of course, it is, considering that last spring few organizations knew Five Oaks was still operating. We must also look at the bottom line. With such generous support and with the increase in usage of the Centre, our operating profit will be approximately \$40,000 in 2017. Staff, volunteers and contributors have done a lot! There is still a long way to go to make the Five Oaks "business" more sustainable with increased hosted events and programs. Our really good news is that usage of the Centre will at minimum double in 2018!

What comments do you have about our financial position?

How do you feel about the Centre spending some of our cash on capital improvements?

Do you know of people who might contribute to a faith bond? Would you be willing to help promote this concept?

How might the Centre increase donors and donor contributions?

(Approximately half of the donations are contributed by 10% of the donors.)

Mission and Vision

Those who attended Roots and Wings in September 2016, will remember the image of a 3-winged fractal. At the end of our time, we agreed that the wings

represented three possible directions for Five Oaks—interfaith/intercultural, healing, care of the earth. The Board is thrilled that there is movement in all three of these directions.

What do you think? Does this report give you a sense that Five Oaks Centre is moving in appropriate directions to fulfill its mission and vision?

Thank you so much for persevering with this report. Your response shows your commitment to the Centre and its vision and mission. Our serious consideration of your comments and our implementation of as many of your suggestions as feasible will show the high regard in which the Board holds our membership.

You may supply your responses to the questions via

hard copy to Five Oaks Member Feedback, 1 Bethel Road, RR3 Paris ON, N3L3E3

or

online survey <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/S5LWNKR>

Yvonne Stewart, Chair of Five Oaks Board of Directors

Ross Carson, Co-Coordinator of the Governance and Policy Working team