

# Message on a Notepad:

## Trinity Western's Ticket to Salt Spring Island

*by Colleen Chase*

It started as a message, jotted on a piece of paper from a hotel notepad. Trinity Western University was holding an event in Edmonton, Alta., and a guest was unable to attend. Scrawled on a note were the guest's regrets and a question: "Would you be able to use approximately 72.6 acres of property on Salt Spring Island?"

The donor, who wishes to remain anonymous, will lease prime real estate for five years at \$100/yr, on one of B.C.'s Gulf Islands to Trinity Western University with the long-term goal to donate the property to the University. "The family was intrigued by activities the University over the past few years and with our vision for the future," says Doris Olafsen, executive director of development. "They wanted to do something, as a family, for the University."

By the donor's request, the island property will be called the "Crow'snest." Located 1.5 kilometers from the small village of Fulford Harbour, the property consists of forest, streams, slopes and open areas with diverse habitat. "One of the most delightful aspects is that there is at least one, and probably two, substantial Garry Oak communities there," says Karen Steensma, director of the Environmental Studies Program, who visited the island property along with David Clements, associate professor of biology and Jack Van Dyke, dean of the faculty of natural and applied sciences. "The Garry Oak is the only oak tree native to the area west of the Cascades and the Pacific Northwest, and it is currently endangered. It is pretty amazing to have something like that on this property. We hope to preserve, enhance and restore the Garry Oak community."

With pristine lakes within walking distance of the property and the ocean close by, students can carry out both freshwater and saltwater studies in an easily accessible location. Ferry access on Salt Spring Island also creates the possibility for students to participate in day trips to the open coast of Vancouver Island for marine work.

Trinity Western's new property has potential for more than the natural and applied sciences. The diverse terrain makes the island property a possible location for athletic training and for students in the human kinetics department to develop recreational programming skills. Historical sites close to the property and the property's suitability for students to study mapping and land use planning also hold promises for the history and geography departments. And Olafsen states that there has even been talk of developing a retreat center on the island. "Our environmental specialists see it as a benchmark in Trinity Western's history for expanding a wide variety of programs at the University," says Olafsen.

By placing students directly into the Salt Spring Island community and giving them the chance for valuable hands-on training, this external site will provide Trinity Western students with new opportunities for a wider range of educational experiences. It will also serve to foster and expand the University's relationship with Lower Mainland communities.

"We hope to develop a support network with the people who live there," says Steensma. "We want them to view our work on the island as being a real asset to their community."

While one or two students may go to the island on a work studies program as early as next summer, plans are still being discussed as to when and how Trinity Western will be able to use its newest outdoor

classroom. For now, Trinity Western staff and faculty are grateful for an additional educational site that is surrounded by water and opportunities.

"I was waiting for the day that something like this would come, and here it is," says Steensma. "Coming at a time when the environmental studies program is in its beginning stages, it is a gift from the Lord."

And it is a gift that Olafsen admits is quite unique. "Who would have thought that out of a scrawled note on a little piece of paper would come 72.6 acres on one of the most prime real estate locations in the Lower Mainland," says Olafsen. "You never know what God has in store. God is a long-range planner."

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