

Bowen Island *Undercurrent* PRIN

What works in sustainable communities

By Bowen Island Undercurrent

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Diana Leafe Christian, one of North America's foremost experts on communication and group dynamics, will be visiting Bowen Island on Friday, August 9. The international author and workshop presenter was invited by the Belterra cohousing project to share her humour and wisdom on the topic: Sustainable communities: what works, what doesn't.

A resident of the Earthaven Ecovillage in North Carolina, Diana is the author of several books, including *Creating a Life Together*, a guide to communication for groups, that has been translated into French, Italian, Spanish and Russian. The editor of *Communities* magazine for 14 years, Diana currently publishes *Ecovillages*, an online newsletter focused on living in sustainable communities.

Belterra cohousing members have been learning about the benefits and challenges of group decision-making, since they have designed and are financing their cohousing development as a group. Now, as the project's October construction start approaches, members are preparing for the next phase: living together in a cohousing community.

Living together can be a challenge – whether you are part of a family of two or community of 100. We can all use some wisdom delivered by a bona fide professional – especially when it is couched in humour that reveals our common humanity.

"Living in a sustainable community doesn't just mean Belterra," says long time Bowen Island resident Roger McGillivray. "The Belterra project is part of the Bowen Island community and the B.C. community, and we want to learn what we can about how to relate better, more sustainably, with all of these communities and each other."

The Belterra community is aligned with the underlying principles of consensus decision-making: active listening, inclusivity, and reaching mutually supportive solutions. "These are some of the values that we believe are important to sustainable communities," says Belterra's project manager Ronaye Matthew, a consultant who has helped to guide the development of six other cohousing projects in Canada.

Diana's presentation will get to the heart of the matter: group dynamics, power struggles, and decision-making.

She will speak on August 9, from 7 to 9 p.m. at Cates Hill Chapel. A \$10 donation is suggested for adults and children over 12. For tickets and directions, please call: 604-240-1036 or see info@belterracohousing.ca.

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