

CAMPBELL RIVER MIRROR

25 years of healing person and planet



Paul Rudan/The Mirror

Hollyhock's grounds and buildings are as uplifting as its programs. The Cortes Island enterprise is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year

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In 1982, a small group of somewhat naïve dreamers scraped together enough money to make a down payment on the old, abandoned Cold Mountain Institute, a mix of deteriorating, hippie-built buildings on Cortes Island.

We called it Hollyhock after the red blossoms in the garden and opened a seminar business in the summer of 1983.

This was the era of "encounter groups," humanistic psychology, and interpersonal therapies. However, we wanted to do something different, go beyond self-indulgent psycho-games and offer a more integrated program, focusing on the creative arts and useful skills such as gardening and cooking. We stumbled many times but we methodically repaired the buildings, invited the most brilliant people we could find to teach, tended an organic garden, and prepared delicious, healthy food. Our first little slogan for guests promised "The holiday that heals." Crazy thing: it worked.

We wanted Hollyhock to be about awareness of the world and nature. In the early years, Ina May Gaskin from Tennessee taught midwifery and activist clown Wavy Gravy taught a refined sort of insanity he called "play." Rick Ingrasci from the Association of Humanistic Psychology and Peggy Taylor from New Age Journal⁰ led a workshop in spiritual healing for couples. Famed psychologist R.D. Laing brought his special brand of interpersonal

psychotherapy. We offered meditation, yoga, and Tai Chi. Joanna Macy helped guide people through the psychological impact of a world gone mad.

Over the years, Hollyhock was blessed with inspired teachers and artists: Rosalyn Bruyere, Rupert Sheldrake, Andrew Weil, Marion Woodman, Starhawk, Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, Robert Bly, Paul Horn, Ann Mortifee, Stanislav Grof, Babatunde Olatunji, Matthew Fox, and others.

By the time I left Cortes with my growing family in 1998, Hollyhock could pay its bills, we had a magnificent garden, and a summer staff of a hundred local residents, cooking, gardening, housecleaning, doing carpentry, plumbing, and so forth. In 16 years we had developed a huge international network, as visitors became collaborators in other projects and links to new resources.

The promise of healing turned into a self-fulfilling prophecy. Guests at Hollyhock get a shot of natural, psychic, and physical health. The garden and the stunningly delicious, healthy food endure as living trademarks of Hollyhock.

In 1997, the centre opened the Hollyhock Leadership Institute to train social and environmental leaders. Some 2,000 people have attended the institute.

"Hollyhock Leadership Institute helps social change activists become more aware of their own personal development," says director Karen Mahon "and helps the aware become more active."

Joel Solomon, now president of Hollyhock, believes the community is "emerging into its dream role of catalyzing social change by gathering activists, innovators, and socially-responsible business leaders. Hollyhock provides direct contact with nature in full glory, so we understand where food comes from, and where we can experience the dark of night and the movement of tides."

Hollyhock CEO, Dana Bass Solomon says, "People who come to Hollyhock are moved, by the land, the garden, the teachings, and the simple kindness of the staff. We are in the business of supporting people who are working to make the world better."

The Hollyhock experiment has been a 25-year search for the authentic person, a person connected to the earth, awake, responsible, committed to making the world a better place. In the western world, blessed with riches and comforts, we have a responsibility to serve humanity. We can see now that the world faces dire ecological and social challenges.

Authenticity, however, is not something Hollyhock or any guru can give to anyone. Awareness at every moment is something we find inside ourselves. Hollyhock is just one of those places where one is invited to look.

"Rex Weyler is a journalist, historian, and author of *Blood of the Land*, *Greenpeace: The Inside Story*, and other books. www.rexweyler.com "