

Notes from Whole Village

By Brenda Dolling & Jon Gagnon
Photos by Jon Gagnon except where noted

It's a model of living that
more of us may need
to embrace as changes
occur in the future.

Whole Village is an intentional community and ecovillage with a commitment to sustainability and land stewardship. The community members living on the Whole Village Farm attempt to live in harmony with each other and with the natural habitat.

Whole Village of Caledon is a 191-acre farm with a provincially significant wetland, hardwood forest, fertile fields, rolling hills and a spring-fed pond. Besides the large, century-old barn and farm sheds, there is a farmhouse typical of the late 1800s and an ecologically built residence called Greenhaven that houses 11 member households and a central common space for the community to share. Each private suite in Greenhaven is equipped with bathroom, kitchenette, bedroom(s) and living/dining space as well as a garden space outdoors.

◀ The beautiful landscape of the 191-acre farm at the Caledon ecovillage is a strong draw for some people.

Continued ▶

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▲ The spring-fed pond is popular after a day spent helping out on a work bee. Jon Gagnon taking a dive. PHOTO SUBMITTED.

▼ A spectacular celebration at the end of one of the popular permaculture courses. ▼

Location

Whole Village is situated on Shaws Creek Road in the rural northwest corner of the Town of Caledon between Orangeville and Erin on the Orangeville Moraine. The property is adjacent to Shaws Creek near the headwaters of four water systems.

Whole Village Philosophy

Whole Village was created to bring together like-minded people who wanted to reduce their ecological footprints and live in community with others who share the same vision. There is a strong urge to work toward self sufficiency, especially the production of food for ourselves and the nearby community, using ecological agricultural methods. Diversity, healthy living, mutual interdependence, outreach and education as well as personal growth are all important principles we strive for. Whole Village provides a safe, supportive



▲ Organic farming, self-sufficient food production and ecological land stewardship are important to Whole Village members.



environment in which to raise children and foster learning about sustainability. Shared decision making is facilitated by using the consensus model. Currently we are planning ways to become more resilient in preparation for an uncertain future.

Beginnings

The current Whole Village community began in 2000, buying land in 2002 and moving all members to the site in 2006. The original community began meeting and planning in the 1990s in King Township. Whole Village is organized as a Co-operative.

Why did you join?

Brenda: As many other members, I had been thinking for many years of ways to live more in line with my philosophy of shared ownership, self sufficiency, ecological farming and communal living. The Whole Village vision was exactly what I was looking for with the

beautiful landscape adding a bonus.

Who might like it?

Jon: Anyone who wants to be part of a working alternative to our current society may be interested in living in an intentional community. At its base, it's about living simply and in harmony with the natural world. Anyone who has tried to live a more resilient lifestyle and has found the work to be too physical and emotionally draining may find comfort and hope in sharing the workload and ideas with like-minded people.

Brenda: Someone who wants to live a more sustainable lifestyle, sharing delicious organic meals together five nights a week; enjoying nature and wishing to steward and restore the land; working together with like-minded people who share the responsibilities and joy of living in



▲ Brenda Dolling giving a tour one April at Whole Village. PHOTO BY MIKE DAVIS.

Greenhaven houses the residences and common spaces of Whole Village Ecovillage. ▼



▲ Stephen Wilson, property manager, in red shirt, leads the construction of the first sleeping cabin near the pond.



community; wishing to be creative and solve problems with others.

Non Residents

Brenda: You can try living in community by renting a B&B room or tenting by the pond. People can volunteer at work bees or for weeks at a time to learn about ecological farming and enjoy the outdoors. It is a place to train new farmers. The farm offers programs for students and other groups to learn about sustainability. It offers a way to offset your carbon production if you drive or fly by donating to the tree planting program – already over 16,000 trees planted. Whole Village is connected to the outside community by giving time, meeting spaces and experience to agricultural, educational, and environmental groups. It's a model of living that more of us may need to embrace as changes occur in the future. And the land is being protected and restored in order to hold more water, provide habitat, and create more local food for the surrounding community.

Jon: We are very interested in building resilience through improving our relationships with

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▲ Brenda, in red, leads an orientation session in Greenhaven's common living space. PHOTO BY MIKE DAVIS.

Apples from the orchard are pressed on site with the Whole Village cider press. ▼

Some of the fresh bounty from the gardens. ▼



the external community. Whether you come as a volunteer, a visitor or simply want to ask us questions about living in an intentional community, we believe caring for our natural world and improving our interpersonal relationships goes well beyond our ecovillage and can be applied everywhere.

Rooms & Residences

There are suites available in the eco-house for purchase and rooms available in the farmhouse for rent. Rents vary according to the space: rooms from \$300 and suites from \$900. The price to buy a suite is negotiated with the suite owner. A typical two-bedroom suite starts around \$190,000 and up depending on the size and amenities. The price of a suite includes a membership share in the co-operative and an ownership share of the land.

Pets?

Cats and dogs and smaller pets are allowed to live in private suites but not in the common spaces.

Visiting

People are invited to come to our orientations held once a month to speak with a resident and tour the house and property. Another way to see the community in action is to attend a monthly work bee where a few hours of team work will earn a delicious organic lunch and good fellowship.

Even More

Whole Village hosts a Permaculture Design Course every summer, a two-week immersion that develops skills for designing environments that mimic nature and systems that are sustainable. We offers spaces for groups to rent for growing food, meetings, education, and recreation. There are also teachers of yoga in residence who often hold classes. **NEV**

Whole Village
www.wholevillage.org
info@wholevillage

Living simply
& in harmony
with the
natural world