



# WILDWOOD ECOFOREST Cedar

## SYNOPSIS

### It takes a community

In December 2016, the Ecoforestry Institute Society (EIS) celebrated its acquisition of Wildwood Ecoforest, saving it from a private sale and keeping it in the public domain. For three years, EIS partnered with citizens, advocacy groups and conservation agencies to raise legal and acquisition funds, promote public awareness and develop the legal instruments needed to protect Wildwood forever, ensuring its place as a unique demonstration ecoforest and learning centre.

## THE CHALLENGE

### Acceleration on all fronts



Wildwood was a publicly donated property, slated by its land trust owner to be sold to a private individual to reduce its debt load. EIS, with its long history at Wildwood Ecoforest, is devoted to

proving that a forest can be managed for human benefit while retaining ecosystem integrity. The small society was funded primarily by memberships and revenue garnered from tours and workshops. The challenge was to increase public support, raise the legal and acquisition funds needed to compete with the private sale, and develop the legal instruments to protect Wildwood in perpetuity.

## THE SOLUTION

### Keeping the promise



Over the years, thousands of people visited Wildwood and learned about owner Merv Wilkinson's ecoforestry practices and vision. Many had originally donated to transfer Wildwood to the land trust agency. Community members, alarmed at the prospect of a private sale, sparked the creation of the Wildwood Protectors, giving Wildwood a strong public voice.

EIS, after several false starts with large donors, attracted the attention of a benefactor, who topped up the legal fund and offered to double match community donations. A six day fundraising campaign raised \$250,000, and together with a \$450,000 Vancity mortgage and creditors who forgave their debt to the land trust, EIS assembled an \$800,000 offer. EIS won the court-ordered bid with its cash offer and ability to keep Wildwood in the public domain. EIS also presented cutting edge legal protection for Wildwood, consisting of a land trust deed written by Canada's top trust lawyer to ensure Wildwood will always be stewarded by a charitable society, a conservation covenant that identifies the covenant holder and defines management principles, and a detailed ecoforestry management plan vetted by one of Canada's top ecoforesters.



## BENEFITS

### Sustaining the future

- **Sustainability:** using ecoforestry practices and serving as an educational centre, Wildwood will generate its own revenue streams.
- **Accessibility:** Wildwood will remain forever in the public domain and under the stewardship of a charitable society.
- **Community engagement:** Wildwood supporters donated not only money, but time, talent and expertise. EIS benefited greatly from the support of a graphic designer, a Parliamentarian, a committed lawyer, public and media presenters, event organizers, construction and plumbing experts, foresters, naturalists, conservation organizations, hundreds of large and small donors, an Excel spreadsheet expert, and in particular, a benefactor with the business savvy and faith to invest in the project. Many will continue to contribute to Wildwood.

## OUTCOMES

### Wildwood means community

- Wildwood will resume its role as a working demonstration ecoforest, the only one on the west coast of North America. Its old growth ecosystem will be protected.
- Wildwood will become a world class educational and healing centre.
- EIS, the genesis of ecoforestry in partnership with Merv, will continue that vision and practice.
- First Nations peoples will be reacquainted with the property.
- Infrastructure building and program development will create many jobs and learning opportunities.
- Wildwood will be available to the community: timber framing instructors; workshop and tour facilitators; ecotourists; artists; musicians; healing practitioners; schoolchildren; post-secondary students; forestry professionals and a myriad of others who enjoy nature.



## LESSONS LEARNED

### Never. Give. Up!



**It took EIS more than 3 years to acquire Wildwood. Stubbornness pays off.**



**Never underestimate the value and grit of determined citizens, especially donors.**



**Social media is key! The six day fundraising challenge was run through Facebook.**



**The Wildwood Protectors sprang up spontaneously, an organic response to the situation. They were key in building community support and supplying Wildwood's public voice.**



**A benefactor, who is well-connected and business-savvy, can provide the momentum and excitement to push the project to success.**



## CONTACT INFORMATION



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**For more information: [gov.bc.ca/economicdevelopment](https://gov.bc.ca/economicdevelopment)**