



History

Located on an extraordinary 25 acres near Shawnigan Lake, British Columbia, [O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE](#)

began operations in 1999 with a vision to create a model demonstration sustainable village community rooted in social, ecological, and economic well being. O.U.R. Ecovillage is the host site for O.U.R Community Association, a registered nonprofit society dedicated to the promotion of sustainable community living. People from all walks of life and all ages are able to benefit from educational programs facilitated within O.U.R developing site. The idea of O.U.R. Ecovillage had its genesis in the early 1990s when a number of people lived in a cooperative household in Victoria. During this time the O.U.R. acronym (One United Resource) was created. Subsequent events can be described in seven different phases.



Phase I (March 1999) □

involved the private purchase of 25 acres of land near Shawnigan Lake in order to secure it from future development. The former owner was eventually convinced that the proposed development of a vibrant, environmentally friendly community would be a very positive use of the land, and ended up donating a third of the original asking price. A group of approximately 14 people came together as the **Creation Team**, taking responsibility for the ongoing design and development process of the community project.



Phase II (2000-2002) □

saw the establishment of [O.U.R. Community Association](#), a registered not-for-profit (541542). An overriding principle was established: that the project would be created “by the community, for the community and through the community” so that none of the overall project would be established for anyone’s primary personal gain — all people would be here as stewards. During this time the Cowichan Community Land Trust and the Land Conservancy of British Columbia worked to create a flora and fauna species mapping of the overall site in order to determine the most vulnerable ecological areas. Next, O.U.R. Community Association embarked on a far-reaching visioning process involving hundreds of communiterians from nearby neighbourhoods, various levels of government, people from corporate and educational backgrounds, and international visitors. This enabled O.U.R. Community Vision to be a broad

representation of what folks wanted to see happen at O.U.R. Ecovillage.



Phase III (2002-2004)

focused on creating a precedent-setting rezoning for O.U.R. Ecovillage. The [“Sustainable Land Management Design”](#)

evolved concurrent with several years of permaculture design. The 25 acres were to stay intact and become a multiactivity integrated land use zone with: a) A conservation area consisting of one third of the property under a protective covenant b) Allowance for educational activities c) An organic production farm, and d) An off-grid eco-home cluster of 9 homes (in addition to the existing home currently used as a residence and Bed and Breakfast). This work with regulatory authorities brought in major support and funding from government. Eventually O.U.R. Team began working with engineering and regulatory teams in earthen construction (

natural building

) using alternative wastewater treatment and other innovative technologies and doing so within approved building codes.

Phase IV (2002-present)

O.U.R. Community Association develops **“TOPIA: The Sustainable Learning Community Institute** .” TOPIA offers a wide array of on-site sustainable living programs (e.g. natural building, organic food production, bio-fuels, community building, etc.)

Phase V (2003-present)

involved the creation and development of the [FOG \(Finance, Ownership and Governance\)](#) research project as an attempt to pull together a new hybrid ownership model for land projects which would accommodate the sharing of common financing, ownership and governance

between multiple stakeholders.

Phase VI (2006-present) □

saw the incorporation of “**The Sustainable Community Development Cooperative.**” The SCDC brings together a team of consultants who specialize in ecovillage design at O.U.R. Ecovillage and similar projects.

Phase VII (July 2007 – present) □

begins with the creation of a new ownership entity (developed with the assistance of the FOG project). In July 2007, we established [O.U.R. Ecovillage Cooperative](#), incorporated with five membership classes. The co-operative was created for the purpose of providing a legal model for the collective ownership of the land and to provide a governance structure that will bring together all the earlier established organizations at O.U.R. and all interested parties. The cooperative has begun to implement this plan through the creation of a business plan in order to secure financing for the purchase and further development of the property.



Phase VIII (2010-present) □

has seen the launch of the [Protect O.U.R. Ecovillage Forever](#) Campaign, a campaign to first, purchase a covenant on the land in co-operation with The Land Conservancy of British Columbia, to protect the land and educational demonstration site into the indefinite future. And second, to hand the ownership of O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE into community hands and release the land from conventional private ownership. Under the umbrella of the Protect O.U.R. Ecovillage Forever campaign we developed of the first alternative to green burial in Canada not associated with a cemetery; the

[Commemorative Legacy Project](#)

which not only protects the legacy of our elders, but the land as well. In addition, the campaign has also helped to establish the

[Community Trust for Ethical Investment](#)

; a way for all of us in the wider community to ethically invest our money back into our local

economy and community.