

February 21, 2023

Mayor and Council  
C/O 1229 Esquimalt Road  
Esquimalt, BC V9A 3P1

RECEIVED  
Feb 22  
2023  
Fund! Corp.  
Officer

Dear Mayor and Council:

My name is Tom Woods and I am one of the volunteers that have been involved in running Esquimalt Ribfest since inception.

In our ten years of operation, Esquimalt Ribfest has grown into the best attended event in the Township's long and storied history and we have raised close to \$1M for various local charities. We estimate that on top of our committee of 10-12 people, our volunteers have put in upwards of 10,000 hours – a remarkable effort from Esquimalt people who care and have truly made a difference.

Our main goal, on top of the myriad of local charities we have supported, is to build a turf field at Esquimalt High School so our kids do not have to leave for several months of the year for outdoor activity when our local fields are closed. EVERY other core municipality, and nearly all of the peripheral ones, have outdoor sports fields that promote healthy outdoor activities 12 months of the year. Oak Bay – with essentially the same population - has three turf fields and we've lost track of the number in Saanich, Langford, Colwood and Victoria. For your reference, EHS increased student enrolment in the preceding year from 690 to 860, Gorge Soccer has 1600 registered players – a full 30% from Esquimalt - and our growing Rugby Academy and boys/girls rugby teams practice in the gym for four months of the year due to field closures: Bullen and Brodeur have been closed since January and all game and practices in all sports have simply been cancelled as there are no available field alternatives. It is long past the time that Esquimalt had a place for our kids to play in the winter months and our committee has spent ten years raising funds for the answer but...we think the goalposts, as it were, have moved a little closer.

In 2020, Ribfest was part of a Federal/Provincial infrastructure grant application for a Turf field at EHS in concert with the Songhees Nation (principal applicant), School District #61, Gorge Soccer, JBAA Rugby, and the Township. We were very optimistic about how this collaborative effort ticked all the boxes, but we were sadly unsuccessful. Just recently we were able to find out that our simple MOU with the School District over future usage was not enough and that the grantors required a formal legal agreement – something we could easily have drafted had we known...

Lesson learned, now fast forward to 2023 and again the Province has stepped up with the Growing Communities Fund of which the Township will see a sizeable influx of unexpected infrastructure money that **can** be used for recreation facilities. In simple numbers, we have raised \$1M in the community for this project between Ribfest, Gorge Soccer and the James Bay Athletic Association. So...what are we asking from you? We want Esquimalt to **surpass** the community funds we bring in by 50%. My guess is that in all your collective tenures as elected officials, you will never see an offer from your community of \$1M for a recreation facility again. Working within this collaboration, we will create the user agreements, formulate the plan, work with the District and Township to build the field, lights, walking trail around the perimeter, hopefully change room facilities and secure an iron-clad user agreement with SD#61 that sees an ROI for the Township through managing evening and weekend rentals.

As an added opportunity, the 2023 North American Indigenous Games are set for Halifax from July 15-23 and there has been much discussion from the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations about hosting this growing event. NAIG is a massive, International sporting festival attended by 1000's of athletes and there is absolutely no reason whatsoever why the organizations mentioned above could not bring this spectacle to the West Coast for the first time ever: the successful creation of the EHS Turf Field would provide a World Class venue for NAIG 2026 and form a wonderful part of the hosting hub.

Lastly, Esquimalt Council, like all others, is faced with many questions, suggestions and requests for funds –the Growing Communities Fund will certainly be no different and we know the funds only stretch so far. However, the years of time, depth of community involvement and breadth of people that live here who will benefit from the creation of this outdoor surface and walking trail speaks for itself and in my view, is unparalleled. Literally, generations of Esquimalt kids will benefit from this project and we all know that active, healthy kids are happy kids.

Our committee looks forward to hearing back from you and more importantly, working with the Township, SD#61, our First Nations Partners and all other groups to see this project through to completion.

Sincerely,



Tom Woods  
Esquimalt Ribfest