

The Product of a Dedicated Group of Denman Islanders

by Graham Brazier

A couple of years ago an unknown number of Denman islanders got together and formed an unnamed group that wrote a 60 page draft of a document they titled: "Denman Island - 2023".

Serendipitously, I stumbled upon an electronic version of their work earlier this year. Their ambitious intentions to serve the community as a repository of information relative to services available to the growing number of residents is summarized in the final paragraph of the Executive Summary where they identify themselves simply, as "we":

"This report is the first step in our efforts to create a repository by, of, and for community information. We contacted as many people and groups as we could think of and included information from all those we heard back from. We are sure there are more people to talk to out there. We look forward to hearing from you and including your information next year."

Their dedication resulted in a 'draft document' packed with informative and, at times, fascinating data of which I pass along a few samples below.

For comparative purposes the group chose to quote statistics for Denman Island as well as Hornby Island, the Comox Valley, British Columbia and Canada throughout the document. The first statistic they quoted under the topic of 'Gender' affirmed that the female population of Denman was, at 53.4%, the largest percentage among the comparative groups. They also wrote: "While there have been no studies, nor does Census Canada capture this information, it is believed that there is a siz[e]able population [on Denman] of those who identify as two-spirited, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, or intersex."

Considering the average age of the population they wrote that both Denman's and Hornby's populations are more than 10 years older than the national average of 43.1 years and that Hornby's average, at 55.9 years, is almost 2 years older than Denman's average which is 54 years.

Also, under the heading of "The Island and its People" it is reported that Denman's Indigenous population of 40 represents 2.99% of its total population whereas Hornby island's Indigenous population was reported to be 70 or 6.31% of the population which is higher than both the Provincial and National averages. The source for this information is not clear.

Under the heading of "Economy - Employment" it is reported that both Denman and Hornby have exceptionally high rates of self-employment. In all of Canada 14.45% of people are reported to be self-employed, whereas on Denman the number is 44.44% and on Hornby, an astonishing 51.55%. However, income reported by both men and women on Denman and Hornby is lower than that reported in the Comox Valley or British Columbia or Canada.

Under the heading of "Economy - Occupations by Industry" a clear distinction between Denman and Hornby emerges. Almost 12% of Hornby's work-force is engaged in providing 'accommodation and food services'. For Canada as a whole this number is close to 6% and for Denman, slightly more than 4% - the lowest amongst those surveyed.

When it comes to 'Income', the women of Denman and Hornby earn less than those in the Comox Valley, British Columbia and Canada. While those on Hornby earn roughly \$30,000 per year and those on Denman slightly more at around \$32,000 per year those in Canada make closer to \$38,000 annually. For men, the figures indicate a greater disparity. For men on Hornby the annual average

income is below \$30,000; for those on Denman it is close to \$35,000 while the average for Canada is slightly more than \$45,000.

It is also reported that throughout Canada and British Columbia, men's after-tax income is higher than women's. Not so on Hornby Island, where, in 2020, women's after-tax income exceeded that of men by \$1,000. On Denman Island, however, women earned roughly \$1,200 more than those on Hornby but \$3,800 less than the men of Denman in 2020.

Under the heading of 'Education' it is reported that in the 2021 census slightly more than 39% of Denman residents possessed a 'Bachelor's Degree or higher'. This compares with 31% on Hornby Island and 27% in Canada.

Quoting information provided by the Islands Trust Conservancy, the document then credits Hornby Island with protecting 37% of its land and Denman Island with 24%; both well exceeding the U.N. target of 17% and the Canadian figure of 13.5%.

On the subject of 'Housing' the document points out the obvious that "Lack of economic resources is the prime reason many Canadians experience housing problems." And then goes on to say, "This is big on Hornby, wages are low, median income is low, job opportunities are scarce and inadequate." Then on the following page it reveals that though Hornby's population is smaller than Denman's by 166 it has 236 more houses than Denman. Subsequently it is shown that 21% of Denman Island residents were considered 'part-time' while 41% of those on Hornby were 'part-time'.

While this document contains extensive and informative statistics that reveal important aspects of this community and its needs; at times, those statistics are surprising and, occasionally, baffling. Nevertheless, it is the text which fully explores the make-up and texture of this community and examines its needs and names the organizations prepared to address those needs. Overall, this document provides an abundance of information worthy of further reflection and discussion.