

Aidian's Pathway

Centre School has a leadership class, which is made up of grade five and six students. These students are given additional responsibilities at the school. One of their assignments for this year was to select a project they were passionate about and see it through to completion. It did not take long for ten-year-old Aidian Haigh to decide he wanted to build a pathway for his project. He decided his pathway should run from Fulford Ganges Road to the Centre School along Blackburn Rd.

I asked Aidian, why he thought doing this pathway was important? He told me, "There is a lot of traffic on this road and lots of trucks and they travel very fast, so it is not safe to walk on the road especially if you are a kid. I want parents to be able to drop off their kids at Fulford Ganges Rd. and have them walk to the school on a safe pathway." Studies has shown that daily exercise helps kids learn and focus on their work, so Aidian is right about this being a good way for students to start their day.

For a couple of years Aidian has been coming to pathway work parties with his dad, Andrew. He found the work fun and rewarding. He decided he would like to be responsible for building a pathway himself. "If I, a kid, can do it, then maybe that will encourage others to do it. If people learn that a kid my age was responsible for putting in a pathway, then they should be able to say, I can do this too and we might have pathways popping up all over the island." Aidian says, "I wish there were more pathways everywhere on Salt Spring so kids, people in wheelchairs and everyone could walk and get to places safely without driving a car, if they want to. I want us to build pathways everywhere."

Island Pathways was so impressed with Aidian and his vision that we decided to support his project. We know building a pathway is more complicated than one might think. Aidian has had to make a work plan and carry it out. Some of the steps he has completed so far are: Deciding what to do and where, researching how to build pathways (standards, materials, costs), making a display of his idea, speaking to groups about his vision and getting support, fundraising, having a survey done and actually working with the surveyor taking measurements, learning to read the survey and determining the best location for his pathway, consulting with a civil engineer, talking with property owners (who wholeheartedly have supported Aidian), walking the route many many times, and starting to clear a footpath. He also wrote and asked for support from our MLA Murray Coell. He received a very nice letter in return from Mr. Coell, "thanking me and saying that he was really proud I was doing this kind of project."

Aidian says he will most likely not finish his project by the end of the school year ("I chose such a big project") but he will continue to work on it over the summer until it is completed. He will not be at Centre School next year, so he hopes that his sister and maybe other students will keep the pathway open and continue to work on improving it. He is hoping this year's Centre School students might take some of their PE classes at the golf course and travel up and down the pathway to get there and back and help pack down the pathway at the same time.

I asked Aidian how he is being marked on this project. He said students are being evaluated on, "our effort and if we tried hard to make a difference." Island Pathways gives Aidian A++ marks. We are very proud of his ability of putting his vision into action and his dedicated hard work. In the words of Aidian, "Everyone can make a difference." I also asked Aidian what else he might like to do someday? And he said, "Build an electric car." We are sure he will.

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Island Pathways