

# A REALISTIC BUSINESS PLAN For Shakesides Nature House

(Revised + updated July 2019)



- 'Shakesides', summer 2013

<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>HISTORICAL BACKGROUND</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>SITE AND STRUCTURE</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>BUSINESS OVERVIEW</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>IMPLEMENTATION /STRATEGY</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>NATURE HOUSE BUDGET (Proposed Operating)</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>SHAKESIDES REHABILITATION PLAN</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS /CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>APPENDIX 'A'</b>	<b>37</b>

Supporting documents for this plan can be found at: <http://macklaingsociety.ca/library/>

This plan has been prepared by a committee of the Mack Laing Heritage Society, led by Gordon Olsen. Special thanks to Denise Lawson for the gift of her time.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REGARDING SHAKESIDES**

This is a Business Plan for the conservation and the operation of Shakesides as a Nature House. This document outlines the financial viability, the rationale, and the path to fulfilling the development of Shakesides as a Nature House (1).

This Plan is based on the vision of Hamilton Mack Laing to have his home Shakesides renovated to become a “natural history museum” as stated in his Will and Trust.

The Indenture made 19<sup>th</sup> day of September 1973 between Hamilton Mack Laing and the Corporation of the Town of Comox: ... “ to pay or deliver over all the rest and residue of my estate to the Town of Comox, upon trust, so that the funds so bequeathed will be used for the improvement and development of my home as a natural history museum, twenty five (25%) per cent of the cash realized to be for capital improvements to the dwelling house, and the remaining seventy-five (75%) percent to be invested by the Town, the income earned thereupon to be applied towards annual operating costs of natural history museum...”

The Plan shows that Shakesides can be converted at reasonable cost into a Nature House with a low environmental footprint and with modest operating budget. This undertaking has the support and commitment of many individuals and businesses in the community who are equipped with the expertise, skills, goods and financial resources to support the project.

For further details refer to pages: business plan 29, community support 19 – 24.

### **SHAKESIDES**

Civic Address: 1431 Comox Avenue

Legal: Address: District Lot 87 Lot 2, Comox District Plan 3387

Date of Construction: 1949

Builder: Hamilton Mack Laing

Original Occupant: Hamilton Mack Laing

1. A Nature House is recognized as a modest natural history museum by the National Association for Interpretation (USA), would be consistent with Laing's wishes --- to teach conservation and appreciation of nature. (National Association for Interpretation. E --- Journal. <https://www.interpnet.com/NAI/interp.>)

## **Hamilton Mack Laing**

Hamilton Mack Laing was an educator and a philanthropist. He moved to Comox in 1920 where he had purchased several acres of shore front land. He hand-built his first home 'Baybrook' (1922) and, subsequently, built his final home 'Shakesides' (1949) on the adjoining land.

Indeed, Mack Laing was an educator; a teacher always willing to share the wealth of his life experiences. He took pleasure from the act of passing his knowledge on to others. This was shown in the decades he spent in determined scientific collecting and related correspondence. His years were also spent as a school teacher, a scout leader, a mentor, an orchardist, an author and a journalist whose door was always open for friends and associates, young or old and from far and wide. This was Mack Laing's way during his long and adventurous life.

## **His Intent**

In 1973 Laing was 90 years old. As he neared the end of his life he fretted over the future of his property and home; he decided to leave it all to the community he lived in.

Clearly, his intent was to leave his beloved Shakesides intact and have it become a nature museum. This would be his final opportunity by which he could open up and illuminate the natural world to his fellow citizens. It could be stated today (2018), that the purpose of Mack Laing's intent is more pertinent than ever before.

## **The Trusts**

To accomplish his vision, in 1973 Laing gifted his home, Shakesides, and the forested acreage surrounding it, to Comox in trust. By agreement Laing continued to live in Shakesides until his death in 1982.

In his 1981 Will, Laing left an adequate sum of money, in trust, for the purpose of amending Shakesides into a "natural history museum", and also to offset "the annual operating expenses" of the museum as he had intended and formally outlined.

These gifts represented almost all of his estate.

## **What has Happened to Mack's Vision**

In the ensuing 36 years since naturalist Hamilton Mack Laing entrusted his home and property to Comox, no attempt has been made to create a museum or any other facility for public purpose. Today, Shakesides still stands. Expert professional opinions vouch for both the favourable structural integrity and also for the significant heritage value of the building.

## Fulfilling Mack's Vision

The Mack Laing Heritage Society (MLHS) was incorporated as a British Columbia non-profit society on May 20, 2014 and seeks to fulfill the vision of Hamilton Mack Laing (1883-1982) as described in the 1973 Trust Agreement between Mr. Laing and the Town of Comox and in his Will of 1981.

MLHS maintains that Shakesides can be restored for use as a small nature education centre, a modest Nature House, as Mack Laing expressly outlined.

### MACK LAING HERITAGE SOCIETY MISSION STATEMENT

- To fulfill, as faithfully as possible, the stated wishes of Mack Laing's 1981 Will and Testament: *"that my home be used as a natural history museum"*.
- To oversee the restoration and maintenance of Mack Laing's home.
- To maintain and promote the dissemination of Mack Laing's environmental values and legacy.
- To fund raise annually and to maintain a variety of environmental programs of interest to the general public throughout the Comox Valley and to the Town of Comox.
- In 2016, the board of the Mack Laing Heritage Society received the Annual Heritage BC Award for 'Heritage Education and Awareness' for their efforts to articulate awareness of the Mack Laing Trust and thereby promote the fulfillment of his vision.

## Reasons For Saving Shakesides

### To support the community's heritage.

Mack Laing was a significant Canadian historical figure who lived and based his work in the Comox Valley who left his land and home with clear instructions for its use as a benefit to future generations.

The Natural Trust of Canada, in their letter of July 31, 2015 which supported preservation of Laing's original home, Baybrook (2), referred to Mack Laing as an "esteemed naturalist, collector, author and educator". The letter goes on to state that "The National Trust urges the Town of Comox to reconsider its decision to demolish this important heritage property."

**Shakesides is a valuable heritage building**, worthy of restoration and use as a Nature House as prescribed by Laing has been recognized by Heritage BC.

Mack Laing was proud to say that he had driven every nail in the building:  
*“Every stick of timber that went into house building was nailed by my own hands.”*  
– Hamilton Mack Laing (3)

**To honour the will and trust of Laing.**

Shakesides has not yet been developed as a Nature House, as set out by Laing, since the Town of Comox took possession following Mack’s death.

**Creating Shakesides as a Nature House is feasible.**

Recent evaluations by Heritage consultants ANCE Building Services (Vancouver) and Bates Engineering (Comox), however, have provided expert opinion that Shakesides remains structurally strong and has significant heritage value for both the style of construction and for the connection to the builder.

**Conservation of Shakesides is achievable and can be accomplished on a reasonable budget.**

There are many nature houses in BC and throughout Canada to use as models. In communities where they have been established, they have proven to become financially viable and an important part of the cultural and educational fabric of those communities.

In 2015, the board of the Mack Laing Heritage Society received the Annual Heritage Award for their efforts to preserve Shakesides and to educate the public about this valuable provincial historic place and to preserve BC’s heritage.

2. On August 5, 2015 the Town of Comox had Baybrook, Laing’s original home, demolished.

Bull, Natalie, Executive Director National Trust for Canada. In her letter to the Town of Comox, Natalie Bull recommends *“take advantage of Heritage BC’s offer of assistance in conservation planning and capacity building training that will help ensure its retention and adaptive reuse for future generations.”*

3. Mackie, Richard Somerset, *Hamilton Mack Laing: Hunter-Naturalist*, Sono Nis Press, Winlaw, 1986. Print.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### Sketch of Hamilton Mack Laing's Life



Mack Laing. Chitina River, Alaska, July 2 1925.

Hamilton Mack Laing was a scholar, educator, artist, photographer, writer, adventurer, naturalist, and environmentalist who lived most of his life in Comox BC. He is renowned throughout North America for his work.

- 1883 born in Hensall, Ontario
- 1901 till 1911 taught school in Oak Lake Manitoba
- 1905 earned commercial story writing diploma from National Press Association of Indiana
- 1907 published first story “The End of the Trail”
- 1909 first visit to British Columbia
- 1913 published his first book *Out With The Birds*
- 1914 graduated from Pratt Institute of Art, New York
- 1914 crossed the United States on motorcycle



The “Transcontinentalist” (Mack Laing) 1914

- 1918 to 1919 during WWI served at RAF Beamsville, Ontario
- 1920 began working as a naturalist field researcher in British Columbia
- 1920 Laing published “Bird Migration at Beamsville”
- 1920 purchased land in Comox following a field research expedition to the area
- 1922 built his first home “Baybrook”
- 1927 married Ethel Hart.
- 1944 Ethel died unexpectedly.
- 1949 Laing sold Baybrook and built Shakesides on the adjoining property

- 1920 – 1982 Professional involvements:
  - Laing participated as a “collector-naturalist” in 10 significant field expeditions for the National Museum of Canada
  - He collected over 10,000 vertebrate specimens for the National Museum of Canada
  - Other specimens and writings reside in the Smithsonian, Royal BC Museum and Manitoba Museum of Natural History and many other museums.
  - Published over 700 articles and scientific papers
  - Hosted renowned artists, writers and naturalist researchers in his home until his death



The Taverner Expedition  
Vaseaux Lake, May 1922

Back row:

Allan Brooks, Percy Taverner, Frank Farley

Front row:

Mack Laing, George Gartrell, D. Alan Sampson

- 1973 he entered into a Trust Agreement with the town of Comox, leaving Shakesides and his land for the purpose of public enjoyment.
- 1979 Mack published *Allan Brooks - artist naturalist*. The biography of his longtime friend and fellow Ornithologist.
- 1982 Mack Laing died in February, at the age of 99. He entrusted his home, land and large sum of money for the creation of a natural history museum to the Town of Comox.

## SITE AND STRUCTURE



### Shakesides 2014

In December of 2015, Bates Engineering – Consulting Structural Engineering (Courtenay BC) conducted a structural Assessment of Shakesides for the Mack Laing Heritage Society.

On July 26, 2016 heritage consultants Elana Zysblat and John Atkin of ANCE Building Services, Vancouver BC, were engaged by Gordon Olsen (Comox, BC), upon the recommendation of Heritage BC, for the purpose of researching the historical and heritage value of Shakesides to prepare a Statement of Significance.

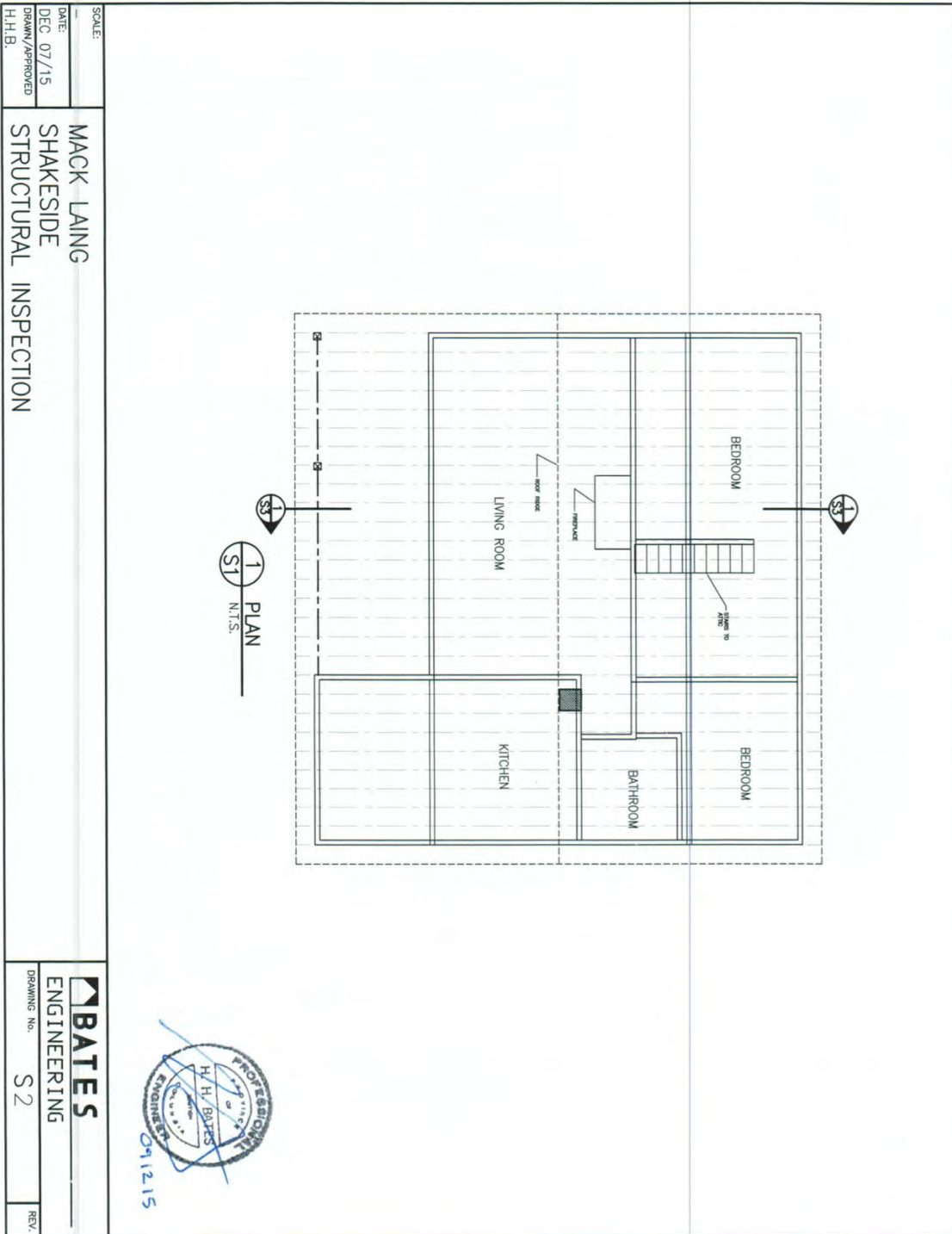
The following information is a summary of information extracted from those reports:

### Site Description

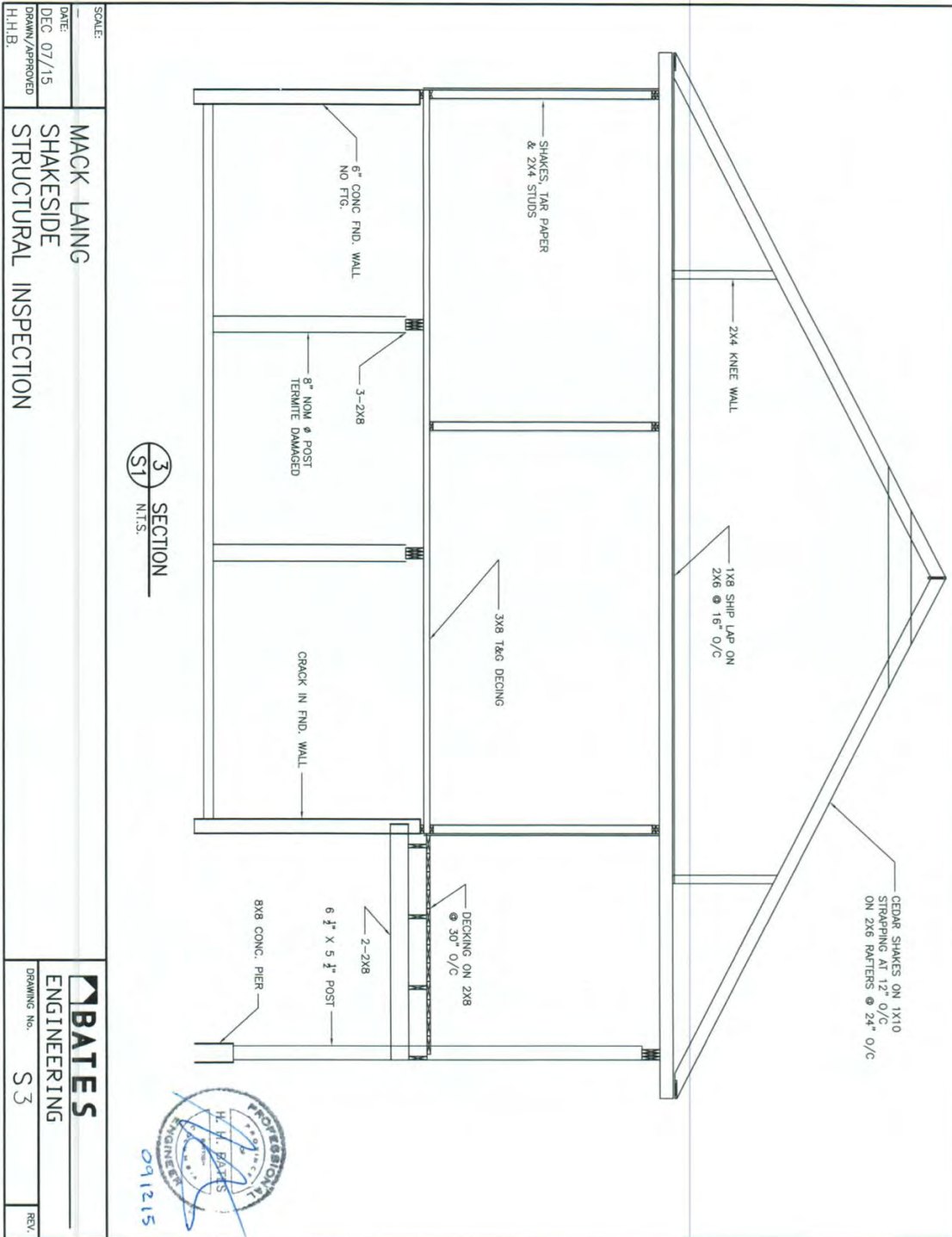
Shakesides is a mid-century vernacular bungalow and was constructed in 1950 by noted naturalist, ornithologist, collector and writer Hamilton Mack Laing. The house is situated on the edge of the Comox Estuary in Mack Laing Nature Park, near the western boundary of the Town of Comox in the Regional District of Comox-Strathcona. The house, built and named by Laing, is associated with the later-half of his career; a productive period of writing, study and mentoring.



# B-2 First Floor



### B-3 Attic Space and Elevation View



## **Shakesides' Value as an Historic Place**

Shakesides is valued for its:

- long association with Hamilton Mack Laing who built the house
- natural and historical context
- design and placement on the property
- construction from locally-sourced materials
- role as the site of Laing's work and study in the later-half of his life

## **Heritage Values**

Shakesides is valued for being built and named by internationally prominent and respected teacher, author, ornithologist, naturalist, collector and illustrator of flora and fauna, photographer, farmer, sportsman and artist (Pratt Institute of Fine Art), Hamilton Mack Laing (1883-1982).

Laing's presence here attracted a resident community of ornithologists and naturalists to Comox starting in the 1920s. This put Comox on the map as a centre for bird watching to this day. Apart from ornithology, Laing's participation in 10 major expeditions for the National Museum of Canada laid some of the important groundwork for today's environmental science. His early concern for the local environment and the health of the Georgia Strait was reflected in one of the earliest studies on the impact of oil spills in the Strait.

Laing's continued importance lies in the strength of the friendships and professional connections made over his long life, in his collections and illustrations of birds, mammals, and plants housed in Canadian and American museums and universities, which include the National Museum of Canada, the Smithsonian, and the Royal Museum of British Columbia, and in his influential nature stories published in newspapers and outdoor magazines.

## Structural Analysis of Value as Heritage Site and Nature House

### Construction

Shakesides illustrates a hand-built, side-gabled vernacular cottage constructed from locally sourced materials. It is clad with cedar shakes that were hand-split on the property. Elements of the house were specifically designed for its challenging location on the shoreline in an area prone to occasional flooding (high concrete foundation, dyke wall). The interior reflects Laing's quirky lifestyle and life's work.

### Character Defining Elements

- location in a small clearing in the forest on the edge of the Comox Estuary at the south end of the original property
- position on property for specific views of the Comox Estuary, bay and mountains
- high concrete foundation and dyke wall on three sides of the house
- locally sourced construction materials including:
  - timber frame
  - logs used as support posts in basement
  - hand split shakes for first floor siding and roof
  - board and batten siding for the upper floor
- side-gabled roof with centrally placed pair of dormers on the south face
- south facing porch and stairs
- original window assemblies and hardware:
  - picture window flanked by casement windows with horizontal muntins on porch
  - paired casement windows with horizontal muntins on south face
  - sash windows with horizontal muntins on east, west, and north faces
  - casement windows in the dormers
  - horizontal divided four light windows, hinged at the top, in the walls of the basement
- original front door
- roofed basement entrance on the north side of the house
- interior elements include wide width cedar paneling with vertical detail in two rooms on the first floor

## Condition Today

Shakesides continues to have solid structural integrity, making it suitable for restoration and conservation as a Nature House.

*“Provided the building envelope is repaired, structural repairs completed and the loads on the building are unchanged, the building structure will continue to perform adequately in the future.”*

– Bates Engineering

### Immediate Repairs/ Upgrades required:

- Repair or replace front deck including roof beam over deck
- Repair the rotten tongue & groove on deck
- Seal the cracks in the foundation walls
- Replace the log columns in the basement; complete with metal saddles
- Upgrade or replace built up beams in basement
- Replace shake roof

(It should be noted that all of the recommended ‘Immediate Repairs’ are relatively straightforward. With the effort of community volunteers and the generosity of local suppliers, these tasks will be low cost.)



Laing as a Boy Scout Leader, c. 1911; Laing is on the right

## BUSINESS OVERVIEW

### Mission

*“The said property [Shakesides] shall be used as a public nature park, for recreation and conservation purposes...and the use of any buildings... shall be restricted to the comfort and convenience of those members of the public wishing to enjoy the quiet beauty of a nature park, ...*  
– from the Indenture made September 19, 1972 between Hamilton Mack Laing and the Corporation of the Town of Comox.

In keeping with Mack Laing’s Will, the aim of the Mack Laing Heritage Society (MLHS) is to create an inviting and enriching space that fosters and inspires people of all ages toward environmental sustainability and stewardship.

MLHS endeavors to deliver Shakesides as both a community resource centre for environmental education and conservation and as a community collaboration hub with cooperating organizations such as Project Watershed, Comox Valley Naturalists, Strathcona Wilderness Institute to offer guest speakers, programs, projects and events for groups of all ages.

### Business Model and Objectives

- Develop a Nature House that is operated as a volunteer driven, non-profit naturalist interpretive centre.
- Create a financially stable business model following the model of other Nature Houses established throughout British Columbia. (Appendix A, page 37 )
- Produce topical, good quality educational programming and resources for displays.
- Establish Shakesides as a centre for ornithological purposes.
- Highlight, in collaboration with Kōmoks First Nation, the history relating to the Great Midden and First Nation presence.
- Offer nature-based programming for all age groups.
- Provide a venue for events: arts and culture based, art demonstrations, musical interludes.
- Create a small library in the east room of Shakesides (formerly Mack’s library) dedicated to the environmental topics, flora and fauna of the respective fields of expertise of Mack Laing and his contemporaries. Particular attention will be paid to the impressive group of early ornithologists, expedition associates, naturalists, and academics whose names include Frank Farley, Allan Brooks, Ronald Stewart, Theed Pearse and members of the secret society known as the ‘B’ (4).

4. Penn, Briony. *The Real Thing*. Rocky Mountain Books, 2015.

Jim Munro, Piercy Travener, Hoyes Lloyd, James Harkin, Kenneth Racey and Hamilton Mack Laing were some of the Canadian members of the Brotherhood of Venerly, or the ‘B’ as they were known amongst themselves. Started in 1925, the ‘B’ drew from wildlife and conservation professions and non-profit societies on both sides of the border. One of their goals was “to shape, guide and foster interests and vocations of the generation that followed them...” pg. 41.

## IMPLEMENTATION / STRATEGY

### Resources:

#### 1. Mack Laing Financial Trust.

It is MLHS's position that the initial bequest and sale of chattels was \$54,588. Using the same interest rate calculations as the Town of Comox (5) used, the Trust Fund balance would be now worth \$288,230.

According to The Will, the funds must be divided, 75% to be invested in perpetuity, the resultant interest to be applied to the annual operating costs and the remaining 25% to be used to adapt Shakesides to public use.

Following the requirement of The Will to split the funds 25/75, means that \$72,000 would be available toward conversion expenses, with \$206,000 to be invested at a favourable rate in an investment suitable for a Trust. A 4% return on the investment, for example, would yield \$9,000 annually.

The Mack Laing Heritage Society can make this work. Costs will be greatly reduced by the members of the community who are willing to donate services and materials to the project. It is reasonable to expect that funding organizations will participate with financial support. Heritage B.C., for example, has stated that Shakesides would be eligible for Heritage Legacy Funds.

Note: The rental income received by the Town of Comox from 1982 to 2014 of \$117,000, has not been included as a possible revenue source for the conversion of Shakesides into a Nature House in this plan.

5. In Richard Kanigan Affidavit number 2, Dec 15 2017 it states:

*[Item] #4. In May 2017, Donald Jacquest, the Town's Director of Finance, and I calculated that if none of the Trust Funds were expended by the town, and that money accrued interest at the rate the Town has actually received, the Trust Funds would have equaled approximately \$ 256,000,00."*

## 2. Supporters / In-kind Services / Skills and Supplies

("putting their money where their mouth is")

The following professionals and tradesmen represent some of the foremost businesses driving the Comox Valley's prosperity, who have vouched or registered in writing their unconditional support for the restoration of Shakesides. These community leaders are offering their time, skills and supplies to the preservation of provincial history.



**Cale Lacasse, Operations manager  
Courtenay, BC**

Rick Lacasse, founder of Lacasse Construction has excelled in building projects in the Comox Valley since 1988. Today it is a family operated company with a solid reputation. It was nominated for Vancouver Island Business of the Year 2017. They are "excited to be part of the project and to assist in preserving a piece of Comox history."



**Mike Hamilton Logging Ltd.,  
Courtenay, BC**

Mike Hamilton is a lifelong resident of the Comox Valley and the proprietor of Hamilton Logging Ltd. His company has a significant presence on northern Vancouver Island. Mike knows the value of preserving Shakesides as a public asset. Mike has generously offered to supply the shakes required for the replacement of the roof.



**Thomas Dishlevoy Architecture Ltd.  
Comox, BC**

Thomas has been practicing architecture in the Comox Valley for over 20 years. He will donate both the Accessibility Audit and upgrade design for Shakesides and also the design to achieve a 'Net Zero' environmental rating for the building. According to heritage experts, Net Zero considerations are a welcome feature in heritage conservation.



**Dave Green, Green Forest Products  
Merville, BC**

"Our sawmill operation will provide, by donation, any specialty dimensional beams or planks which may be required in the conservation work of Shakesides house in Comox. These historic old buildings were frequently over built with beams which are not available today. It will be our pleasure to supply such items."



**Peter Gillespie, Gillespie Contracting  
Union Bay, BC**

"I will 'step up to the plate' for Shakesides. Conserving windows are always an important detail of old buildings. I will assess the windows in Shakesides with the goal of maintaining the authenticity and appearance of the period of construction. Where possible, all existing frames, mullions and muntins will be preserved. I have extensive experience in conservation and am currently finishing a major building upgrade and conservation of an old residence in Comox for a private client. My involvement will be pro bono."



**Troy Nystrom, Roofer**  
**Merville, BC**

Raised in Comox, Troy is very familiar with Shakesides and is committed to helping to preserve it. He is an experienced roofer and specializes in applying shakes. Troy has offered to take on the job of re-roofing Shakesides as his contribution.



**Jake Greenwood, Manager**  
**Cedar Grove Roofing Supply**  
**Courtenay**

Troy Nystrom came to the project via Jake's suggestion. Jake knows both Troy and Pete Gillespie, he is pleased to be involved and will provide roofing materials such as underlay, flashing and venting products at cost through Cedar Grove Supply.



**Christoph vom Bruch,**  
**Three Oaks Flooring**  
**Courtenay, BC**

"I am offering my services to repair and refinish the Hardwood floors in Shakesides on a volunteer basis. All my labour will be without charge. All needed material should be provided by Mack Laing Heritage Society. I look forward to being part of the team."



**Kristian Nielsen,  
Bricklayer + Tiler  
Comox, BC**

Kris has 40 years in the masonry industry as a journeyman, foreman, independent contractor and as a field and safety supervisor. Also, he can act as a site caretaker of the mandated official safety standards, procedures and practices, when the General Contractor is off-site. His involvement will be on the pro bono basis.



**Garrett Herrling, Manager  
Bartle & Gibson  
Plumbing / Heating / Electrical  
Courtenay BC**

Garrett's firm offers a wide range of renovation materials. He will supply such at a preferred cost for the project



**Kevin Parker, Manager,  
Windsor Plywood,  
Courtenay BC**

Kevin has worked in the industry since 1969 and has a long association with Lacasse Construction, providing materials for many of their projects. The conservation of Shakesides is a "great community project" in Kevin's words. He looks forward to being involved and providing construction materials from Windsor Plywood at cost.



**Georg Olsen, Gardener  
Courtenay**

Georg has offered her expertise in re-establishing the flower beds in the immediate area to the house, prune the apple trees and trim the massive grape.



**Bill Van Dyke, Metal Fabricator  
Comox, BC**

Bill has offered to fabricate any window or door devices to facilitate security for Shakesides.



**Chris Rivers, Glazier  
Comox, BC**

Comox Valley Glass and Mirror will provide the replacement window panes needed in Shakesides.



**Robin Jasbec, Carpenter  
Comox**

Robin has 38 years in woodworking. Being skilled at working with large timbers and beams, Robin is always in high demand. He will be an asset if any replacements are required at Shakesides.



**Elana Zysblat and John Atkin  
ANCE Building Services  
Vancouver, BC**

- well known heritage consultants in BC for their engagement with communities, leadership in public programs related to local heritage topics, and for production of historical publications and presentations.
- produced the Statement of Significance for Shakesides and feel strongly about the historical significance of Shakesides.
- have offered to prepare the Conservation Plan without charge.



**Christopher Gerow,  
Carpenter, Comox, BC**

Chris writes: "It will be my pleasure to participate in the Shakesides Project. I am familiar with Mack Laing's former home and will contribute my time. My experience in concept design, renovation and restoration is extensive with interior and exterior applications. I have a working knowledge of plumbing, electrical and carpentry.



**Dale Caudwell, Customer Service Manager  
E.B. Horseman and Son,  
Courtenay Branch**

A major electrical wholesaler, E.B. Horsman and Son will support the conservation of Shakesides with contributions of their knowledge and materials.



**Laura Paech, Branch Manager  
Cloverdale Paint Inc.,  
Comox Valley**

All paint and needed painting supplies will be donated for the restoration and updating of Shakesides Nature House.



**Michael Frank, Owner / Operator  
Frank Excavating, Kómoks**

Mike will do any digging such as repair to the retaining wall near the house. Known for his attention to detail, He can get into confined areas with this machine.



**Greg Frank**  
**Kómoks First Nation**  
**Carpenter/ Maintenance Manager**

Greg has offered his wide spectrum of skills for the restoration of Shakesides. His skills are not limited to carpentry. As KFN maintenance manager he has a working knowledge of all aspects of building maintenance.



**Charles Cranmer, Construction Site Safety Officer**  
**Kómoks**

Offering on site safety supervision, Charles has experience with large projects throughout BC. He is looking forward to being part of the Shakesides project .



**Richard Lepine, Proprietor**  
**Simply Quality Service, Painting and Powerwashing**  
**Comox**

Richard has twenty five years of experience and is pleased to offer his skill to restore the painted interior surfaces. He has a passion for historic people and places (his great great uncle was Louis Riel).



**B. Frank Electric  
Courtenay, BC**

Ben and his step-father Steve Ellis are both electricians, and are willing to redo the wiring in Shakesides up to modern code at no cost. Working with E B Horsman & Son will make this major task cost free. Steve is a lifelong resident of Comox, he brings enthusiasm with his skills.




**Ronald Mitchell, Carpenter  
Kómoks**

Ron is a carpenter for BC Hydro and is skilled at tackling non-typical building tasks. He wants to contribute to conserving Shakesides.



**Derek Bjork, Modern Doors  
and Windows  
Comox Valley Branch**

When Derek heard about the Shakesides project he offered to provide assistance with all window needs.

<p>Photograph not available</p>	<p><b>Jensen Risi, Plumber Courtenay, B.C</b></p> <p>Jensen has lived in the Comox Valley all of his life and he wants to be involved with the efforts to save Shakesides.</p> <p>Jensen has offered to renovate and replace the existing bathroom fixtures in Shakesides. His labour will be donated.</p>
	<p><b>Tami Jensen, Owner, Courtenay, BC</b></p> <p>Tami has demonstrated her support and generosity for four years. She is offering to do the building maintenance in Shakesides as her continuing contribution.</p>

**3. Funding Organizations**

► **Endswell Foundation**

Grants are awarded to registered charitable organizations in British Columbia who are dedicated to conservation and related public education that also respect the rights of aboriginal peoples and their traditional land use.

Email: [endswell@220cambie.com](mailto:endswell@220cambie.com) / [www.endswell.org](http://www.endswell.org)

► **Heritage Legacy Fund**

The Heritage Legacy Fund of British Columbia is an initiative of the Heritage Society of BC and The Land Conservancy that supports many local heritage projects around the province. It provides financial assistance and guidance to help protect, care for and showcase British Columbia's rich cultural heritage.

► **Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation**

Funding is provided to non-profit organizations in the area of cultural and creative arts and social services who serve communities throughout the province. Modest grants are given to fund programs and projects that would not be possible without assistance or additional funding. E-mail: koerner@telus.net

► **Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia**

The Foundation supports non-profit organizations with goals of sustainable real estate and land-use practices, in endowment grants and project funding upwards of \$100,000. Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia. Email: info@realestatefoundation.com

► **Vancouver Foundation**

The Vancouver Foundation is Canada's largest community foundation, constantly working to improve the lives of people living in British Columbia. The Foundation supports innovative projects under the scope of 3 different programs: Community Impact Grants, Special Grants, and Partnership Grants.

► **VanCity/ Real Estate Foundation: Green Building Grant**

Established in 2004, the vision behind this grant is to minimize the impacts of climate change while also improving sustainable land-use practices. Grants of up to \$50,000 are provided annually to recipients who put forth green building initiatives in B.C.

► **Comox Valley Community Foundation**

Funds are presented to registered charities and qualified donees for program related or capital projects that intend to enrich the quality of life in the region of Comox Valley. [www.cvcfoundation.org](http://www.cvcfoundation.org)

► **Parks Canada's National Historic Sites Cost-Sharing Program**

This program provides assistance to national historic sites that are neither federally owned nor administered and that are deemed to have commemorative integrity. Applications to the 2019-2020 program are being accepted until November 23, 2018.

► **Canada Cultural Spaces Fund (CCSF)**

This fund is available to non-profit arts and heritage organizations as well as provincial/territorial and municipal governments and their equivalents for projects that support the improvement, renovation and construction of arts and heritage facilities. Funding may also be provided for the acquisition of specialized equipment and to conduct feasibility studies.

► **Benjamin Moore Community Restoration Program**

This initiative offers cash grants (up to \$4,000) and paint (up to \$750 retail value) to support registered charities with heritage restoration projects in Canada. Benjamin Moore & Co., Limited, in partnership with the Community Foundations of Canada, offers cash grants (up to \$4,000) and paint (up to \$750 retail value) to support heritage.

► **Celebrate Canada**

A wide range of groups are eligible to apply for funding to support community activities and events that celebrate Canada during the period of June 21 to July 1. Celebrate Canada is a Department of Canadian Heritage program that helps support community activities and events that celebrate Canada. Non-governmental community and charitable organizations, municipal governments, educational institutions and public and private corporations are eligible to apply.

► **The Getty Foundation**

The foundation provides grants to national and international professional membership organizations in fields related to the preservation of the visual arts. The Getty Foundation provides grants to national and international professional membership organizations in fields related to the preservation of the visual arts, such as art history, conservation, and museums.

► **Green Municipal Fund**

Grants of up to \$350,000 are available to municipal governments to cover half the eligible costs of integrated sustainable community Plans and Studies.

► **Hylcan Foundation**

Grant applications are accepted from registered charities fitting the following categories: health and social service, education, arts and animal welfare. Grants range from approximately \$1,000-\$25,000. The Hylcan Foundation accepts grant applications from registered charities across Canada that have been advised to apply and that fit within the following categories: health and social service, education, arts and animal welfare.

► **The McLean Foundation**

Applications are accepted from registered charitable organizations. Grants are awarded to projects that demonstrate a general public benefit in areas such as conservation, the arts, education, health and welfare. Grants average approximately \$6,500 in a given year. Email: [info@mcleanfoundation.ca](mailto:info@mcleanfoundation.ca)

► **The Royal Bank of Canada Charitable Foundation**

Grant applications are accepted from not-for-profit, registered charities that fit within the following categories: education, health, social services, civic and arts and culture.

► **BC Nature Foundation**

Provides funding support for education programs, wildlife viewing, Nature events, bird monitoring and observing, development of outreach and paper-based materials.

### **3. Potential User Groups**

**The following groups have publicly voiced their interest in collaborating with MLHS and in making use of Shakesides, once it is restored as a Nature House:**

- BC Nature
- Comox Valley Nature Botanists Group
- Comox Valley Nature Birders Group
- Comox Valley Nature Heritage Group
- Comox Valley Nature Marine Foreshore Group
- Invasive Species Organization
- Jill Peacock / Educator, Highland School Eco Team, Comox BC
- Bahai Group
- Scouts and Guides (Mack Laing was a Scout leader)
- Scribblers Writing Group
- Hand - In - Hand Outdoor Nature Preschool (see Addendum)
- Learning Journeys Montessori Preschool, Comox, BC
- Strathcona Wilderness Institute

#### **Other anticipated users / programs based on research of existing like centres**

- School Programs developed to cover Prescribed Learning Outcomes for grades K---12.
- On-Site Programs: Interpretive Nature Walks; Interpretive Local and Canadian Environmental History; Nature Art Workshops (tradition of botanical water colours following from Laing's own work); birding workshops).
- Local First Nation traditional education and cultural sharing (middens are adjacent to Shakesides)
- In its role as community resource for environmental education, scheduled workshops and lectures will be offered to the public at Shakesides.
- Summer Programs for all age groups. Visitors to Mack Laing Park have particular interest in the physical state and history of Shakesides, the parkland and the foreshore.
- Community Engagement Events (Earth Day, Annual Shoreline Clean-up).

# NATURE HOUSE BUDGET (Proposed Operating)

Sheet1

Endowment Principal \$225,000.00  
 Endowment Annual ROR 4%  
 Inflation Rate 2.00%

Income

Category	Item	Monthly	Annually	Notes
Endowment	Endowment Annual Return	\$750.00	\$9,000.00	Annual Income from Endowment Fund
	Facility Rental	\$200.00	\$2,400.00	\$20/hour times 10 hours per month
	Memberships	\$416.67	\$5,000.00	100 members at \$50 per membership
	Donations - Fund Raising	\$250.00	\$3,000.00	Annual fund raising revenue from public donations
	Donations - In Kind	\$250.00	\$3,000.00	Volunteer contributions (administration, maintenance]
		<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>\$1,866.67</b>	<b>\$22,400.00</b>

Grants

Government (Heritage Legacy Fund)	\$1,000.00	\$12,000.00
Corporate	\$1,000.00	\$12,000.00
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>\$2,000.00</b>	<b>\$24,000.00</b>

**Total Revenue** \$3,866.67 \$46,400.00

Expenses

Category	Item	Monthly	Annually	
Shakesides	Mortgage	\$0.00	\$0.00	
	Property Taxes	\$0.00	\$0.00	
	Utilities (Gas, Water, Power)	\$200.00	\$2,400.00	
	Property Insurance	\$100.00	\$1,200.00	
	Maintenance	\$400.00	\$4,800.00	
	Housekeeping	\$100.00	\$1,200.00	
	Security	\$50.00	\$600.00	Simple internet connected webcam system
	Professional Fees	\$125.00	\$1,500.00	
	Advertising and Promotion	\$100.00	\$1,200.00	Website, brochures etc.
	Volunteer Appreciation	\$25.00	\$300.00	
	Fundraising Expenses	\$100.00	\$1,200.00	
	Office Supplies	\$20.00	\$240.00	
		<b>Expense Sub-Total</b>	<b>\$1,220.00</b>	<b>\$14,640.00</b>

Contingency (+10%) \$122.00 \$1,464.00

**Total Expenses** \$1,342.00 \$16,104.00

**Income - Expenses** \$2,524.67 \$30,296.00

## **OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Facilities**

The area of Shakesides is 1032 square feet on the main floor. The size of Shakesides naturally sets parameters for use. The main floor has a small kitchen with a dining alcove, a bathroom, a bedroom, a study and a living room with a fireplace. The space in the bedroom is adequate for a library and archive.

These spaces lend themselves to small meetings / study groups and drop in visitors to access resource materials and modest installations related to the area and to the life and work of Mack Laing and his associates.

The basement is similar in square footage, has a full height ceiling, and ground level access. Previously it housed a photography dark room, a workshop, and scientific storage cases for hundreds of stuffed birds. The area has great potential for multi-purpose use. The heating system is electrical baseboards.

Shakesides is located within the Mack Laing Park along Brooklyn Creek and can be accessed by a short peaceful walk through forest trails. This is in keeping with the Will and Trust in which Mack states; "public vehicular traffic within the said property shall not be permitted...".

Shakesides will be accessible to those with mobility challenges.

### **Human Resources**

Staffing for the Mack Laing Nature House will be voluntary. A dedicated staff can be easily drawn from the robust memberships of Comox Valley Nature, Mack Laing Heritage Society, and the many citizens in Comox who have stated their support of this project.

#### **Nature House Staff**

- Nature House Coordinator
- Education Coordinator
- Access manager
- Custodian

### **Public Relations**

MLNH will promote the activities of Shakesides Nature House within the community, including media, educational organizations, business, charities, government and non-government organizations. Associated budgetary costs will be low. It may be advantageous, however, to hire a summer student. As with all other non-profits, these costs could be covered by a Canada Summer Jobs grant.

### **Insurance**

House insurance should be part of the trustee's responsibilities, as it has been since 1982. Liability insurance would be covered by a managing group. As the lead society may be Comox Valley Nature and BC Nature, liability could be assumed by them, as their insurance covers "any and all naturalist activities," 12 months of the year and liability up to \$3 million.

# SHAKESIDES REHABILITATION PLAN

## **Secure a strong Statement of Significance.**

(Secured in August 2016, Zysblat and Atkin, ANCE Building Services, Vancouver BC)

## **Secure a Condition Assessment**

(Secured April 9, 2017 by Zysblat and Atkin, ANCE Building Services, Vancouver BC)

## **Ensure that Shakesides has official heritage recognition.**

This distinction is made only if the municipality applies for it. The Town of Comox must apply for heritage status.

The Town of Comox Planning Procedures Bylaw No.1780 already enables Heritage Designation makes this a straightforward process for application for status with the Heritage Registry in Victoria, BC.

Heritage BC in letters dated October 27, 2016 and March 14, 2017 to Mayor and Council of Comox, offered its assistance in helping the Town of Comox with the process of gaining heritage status for Shakesides. In these letters the Town was apprised of both consultant and funding opportunities that could be made available.

## **Secure a Conservation Plan**

A Heritage Conservation Plan is prepared by a heritage professional in consultation with the established stewards of an historic place. Its goal is to:

- A. Understand the Heritage Value of the Historic place
- B. Plan for its Conservation (including simple repair and maintenance as well as rehabilitation for new uses and/or accessibility)

Before any plans are put in place, or work carried out, the Standards and Guidelines for Heritage Conservation in Canada call for producing a Statement of Significance to properly and formally recognize the heritage value of the place.

A Statement of Significance (SOS) is one of the first steps in understanding historic places. It is both a starting point and a guide for communities, property owners, architects, developers, planners and anyone who may be planning the future of a historic place.

An SOS was commissioned by Gordon Olsen in 2016, written by ANCE Building Services, members of the Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals and directors on the BC Chapter of this organization. The secured Statement of Significance has guided the understanding of the historic place and the planning for its conservation and sustainable adaptive reuse.

As part of the research, a Condition Assessment was conducted by the previously identified consultant, outlined immediate interventions needed to arrest any ongoing deterioration and to allow time to plan for conservation and rehabilitation.

A Heritage Conservation Plan, committed in-kind by ANCE Building Services to the MLHS, explains how to sustain the significance identified in the SOS (the heritage values and character defining elements) in its new proposed use, alteration, repair and management. It utilizes a simple thinking process which starts with describing what is there, its condition, what is happening to it and the principles by which it will be managed (from the Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Heritage Conservation) and then sets more detailed work programs for maintenance, management, access, use or other issues. Each part of the property (building and site) will be specified to be either preserved, restored or rehabilitated depending on its condition, its significance and its intended function.

A Conservation Plan is especially crucial in cases like Shakesides where numerous people make decisions about the building and it is passed on from generation to generation. Having a 'go-to' document and/or plan helps guide decisions, maintenance and priorities. A Conservation Plan is also extremely helpful in requesting quotes for conservation work and grant funding for said work.

### **Establish a maintenance plan and site security.**

#### **Future Plans: The way forward**

- With the support of architect Tom Dishlevoy we are looking into designing the house for net zero water, waste and energy that would minimize future operational costs. "Just like Mack would have done if he was living in 2018."
- Connect with the institutions and museums which are in possession of the many Mack Laing artifacts in order to acquire / borrow for display purposes.
- Mack was a sustenance gardener; efforts to re-establish his vegetable garden would add to the atmosphere of Shakesides.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This plan is a document which implements all of Mack Laing's wishes as outlined in his Will and Trust.

This business plan is an outline of feasible possibilities inherent in keeping the building, Shakesides, and developing it into a Nature House as Mack Laing prescribed.

Included in this plan are heritage projects that demonstrate the possibilities inherent in keeping the building Shakesides and developing it into a nature house as Mack Laing outlined in his will and indenture.

- The following are examples of both large + small Nature Houses in the province of British Columbia. They exemplify the range of presentation and programming that is unique to a nature house.

- Goldstream Nature House, Victoria
- Gorge Nature House, Victoria
- Sibyl Andrews Cottage, Campbell River
- Allen Brooks Nature Centre, Vernon (6)
- Swan Lake Nature House, Victoria

- See the **Appendix A** for a list of heritage projects that were researched for the financial and operations feasibility aspects of this plan.

A comprehensive picture of the select programs that would generate the most interest in Comox will emerge as a template for future involvement. It is recommended that working with School District 71, North Island College, Project Watershed, Strathcona Wilderness Institute, The Comox Valley Land Trust, Comox Valley Naturalists Society and the Comox Valley Conservation Strategy, and The Brooklyn Creek Streamkeepers be maintained. The Natural Trust of Canada, in 2015, referred to Hamilton Mack Laing as an "esteemed naturalist, collector, author and educator".

The fact that Laing was an educator, is evident throughout his entire life. The intent of his work as a naturalist was not for personal acclaim, but rather to inform and ignite passion and stewardship of the natural world in future generations. An example of his vision as an educator and advocate for the natural environment can be experienced by reading work such as "*Black Death on the Shore*" (7).

He chose to pass on both his work and property as a gift to the community in perpetuity. It could be said that Mack Laing understood not only the needs of nature, but also human nature. He set out wise provisions to make his vision a reality and his generous financial underwriting promotes his legacy.

The vision to preserve Shakesides as a Nature House is more than a looking-back at a great man worthy of remembering; it provides an opportunity to create a place where learning can take place through observation. The Mack Laing Heritage Society is committed to honouring the Will and Trust of Hamilton Mack Laing and endeavours to develop Shakesides as Mack envisioned. MLHS believes it is possible to develop a Nature House for the community to learn more about the natural world, and our heritage which includes the fascinating life of an important Canadian, and to "enjoy the quiet beauty of a nature park".

6. It is important to note that Mack Laing and Allen Brooks were long time professional collaborators and friends.

Mack Laing wrote Allen Brooks' biography; *Allan Brooks: Artist Naturalist*.

7. Laing, Hamilton Mack. *Black Death on the Shore*, BC Archives and MLHS Website. c. 1955 essay.

## Appendix A

Several museums and heritage projects throughout British Columbia were researched by the Mack Laing Heritage Society. Each was contacted and through the process of a consistent questionnaire format, pertinent information was gathered to compare projections for project scope and budget of the Shakesides Nature House.

The following list represents those projects with similarities to the plan for Shakesides:

- Miyazaki House, Lilloett
- Sybil Andrews Cottage, Campbell River
- Whale Interpretive Centre, Telegraph Cove
- Strathcona Wilderness Institute, Mount Washington
- Taghum Hall, Nelson
- Lardeau Valley Historical Society Museum, Meadow Creek
- Princeton Museum, Princeton
- Kettle River Museum, Midway
- Buckley Valley Museum, Smithers
- Wells Museum, Wells
- Mcloughlin Garden House, Merville