



BCIA President, Jennifer McGuire (far left) and Councillor, Jessica Morgan (far right) award new P.Ag.'s their certificates at the OKanagan Branch AGM. Left to right: Nenad Niciforovic, Kirsten Kurjata, C.S. Scott Smith

Okanagan Branch AGM

Thursday, February 9, 2017 was the annual get together for the Okanagan Branch's AGM in Kelowna. Greg Tegart, P.Ag and John Garland, P.Ag hosted a group of 25 Agrologists at the "Strategic Planning" P.D. session in the afternoon prior to the dinner and meeting. The day was a bit lousy for driving, but the energy and warmth at the Ramada was inviting for all who attended. Happy Hour kicked off the evening, followed by dinner. The Annual General Meeting included greetings and a Q&A with BCIA President Jennifer McGuire. The evening program featured P.Ag certificate presentations, A.Ag introductions, special awards and a conversation with Emily MacNair from the BC Agriculture and Food Climate Action Initiative. Many thanks to all who attended, especially those who travelled from away. [Read more ...](#)

Peace River Branch AGM

The Peace River Branch held our AGM on January 20, 2017 in Fort St. John, BC. It was a well attended meeting where our members also had the opportunity to learn more about composting, look at projections for how climate change could impact our region, and learn about the recent changes to British Columbia's Spill Response Regime and Contaminated Sites Regulation Omnibus Update. It was a successful day of learning, discussions, and friends. *Aaron MacKay, A.Ag.*

Victoria & Island Branch Tour

On March 4, 2017, members of the Victoria and Islands Branch toured a vineyard and nursery in the beautiful Cowichan Valley on Vancouver Island. Although the day started out with a sprinkling of snow, the sun came out for the vineyard tour at Blue Grouse Estate Winery and Vineyard. Bailey Williamson, the estate's winemaker, and Michael Abbott, the vineyard manager, led members on a tour of the vineyards. Members learnt that the vineyard started out as a research site for vines, but is now owned privately. It was pointed out that growing grape vines on Vancouver Island was considered 'on the edge' of what the climate would allow. [Read more on the next page....](#)



New P.Ag.'s were awarded their certificates at the Peace River Branch AGM. Left to right: Lori Vickers, P.Ag, Josh Stoski, Brian Hawes, Todd Lewis, Chelsea Mottishaw, Katrina Hill, Charles Brissard, and Margaret Fenton, P.Ag. Since 2015, A.Ag. Coordinator, Margaret Fenton, has helped 20 A.Ag.'s achieve their P.Ag. status. Thanks for your hard work!



Victoria & Islands branch tour of Blue Grouse Winery



Victoria & Islands Branch Tour...cont'd

Hardy varieties like Ortega were first established and produced grapes for the winery.

The vineyards are located on south-facing slopes, fairly good clay soils with onsite artesian wells and a pond that collects rainwater for the dry season. The vineyard covers about 8.5 acres and varieties currently grown include Pinot Gris, Pinot Noir, Muller Thurgau, Ortega, Black Muscat, Siegerrebe and Bacchus. As this is a wet climate, the expected lifespan of the vines is about 30 to 35 years versus those grown in California. Members inquired as to the soil type, and if fertilizers, pesticides or herbicides are utilized. In the beginning the vineyard experienced two good growing years out of ten, but now with climate change, the reverse is true. The vineyard has a weather station to help predict the last frost before the growing season and first frost of the fall. Members were surprised to learn that the fencing around the vineyard is to keep out Elk, not only to keep out bear, cougars and deer.

[Read more on the next page...](#)

Victoria & Islands Branch Tour....cont'd

The tour was then directed to the winery where the fermentation process was explained. Bailey noted that about 33,000 litres of wine were produced in 2016. The winery produces wine from its own grapes, but also brings in grapes from other local vineyards and the Okanagan to make the 'Quill-labelled' wine. This winery has its own bottling line and buys its glass from North American suppliers. The process to make sparkling wine was shared with our members as well as a traditional process to remove sediment invented by Madame Clicquot. Members were then treated to a few tastings of the wine offered at Blue Grouse and a few bottles were then purchased.

After having a delicious lunch catered by Cure Artisan Meat and Cheese, members headed to Dinter Nursery, less than five minutes from the Blue Grouse Vineyards. Dinter Nursery is one of the few privately owned nurseries on Vancouver Island. A family business, started in 1973, Bernie Dinter, the original owner's son, took over the business and has been a Professional Agrologist for over 30 years.

Dinter Nursery grows about two-thirds of their bedding plants and approximately 85 per cent of their veggies on the eight-acre nursery site. This nursery also utilizes two leased acres in the Cobble Hill area. Bernie explained that he buys as much locally grown product on the island and the Fraser Valley, then from a supplier in Oregon. The nursery also supplies 'Sea Soil' manufactured on the island at Port McNeill, where end products from the forestry and fish industries create the Sea Soil material, sought after by many Vancouver Island gardeners. This operation is hands on — from filling pots, to starting plants from seed each year and any repotting needed. In the past staff hand-watered greenhouses full of hanging baskets – now a sprinkler system does this necessary work. Members toured through various heated and non-heated greenhouses – some guarded by cats!

It was noted that customer demands have changed over the years. At first, islanders were food growers looking for vegetable starts; this morphed into ornamental gardeners with a current-day mix of environmentally conscious gardeners and food growers. Deer-resistant plants are in high demand on the island and customers are now sensitive to invasive species and want to purchase nematodes and ladybugs instead of pesticides. Bernie

recently constructed a frame and screens to protect his many species of Japanese maples from the damage of the summer sun. At the end of a few rows of potted trees, members noticed a planter with asyllum and yarrow – this helps keep the aphids at bay. Staff shared the difficulty of keeping plants aphid-free, to accommodate the public's misconception of aphids and the nursery's preference to not use pesticides. The need for public education on the benefits of not spraying for aphids was brought forward. The gardeners in the group were excited to return and browse at their leisure. If you are looking to grow your own tea or wasabi, head to this locally-owned nursery.

Jennifer Wilson, P.Ag.



Victoria & Islands Tour of Dinter Nursery in Cowichan Bay



[Next Page](#)

Okanagan Branch AGM - cont'd

The Okanagan Branch selected Bite Me Organics as the 2017 Family Farm winner. Richard King, P.Ag and his partner, Robyn, graciously hosted the Branch for a Brown Bag PD tour in the summer of 2016, with the highest attendance ever for a Brown Bagger! Sharing the ins and outs of organic tree fruit production, agri-tourism, and contributions to the Agriculture Industry and Community over many years, were key elements in choosing Bite Me Organics for the BCIA Okanagan Branch Family Farm Award. Congratulations to the King Family!

For a second year, the Okanagan Branch presented Agrologist Achievement Awards. This year's winners were Chuck Bulmer, P.Ag for excellence in soil science and civil service and Rob Dinwoodie P.Ag for outstanding Range Management and mentoring young land stewards. Carl Withler P.Ag received an Environmental Achievement award for his work on Mission Creek restoration activities.

The new Okanagan Branch Executive was acclaimed and the members are grateful to the volunteers for their time and commitment as our leadership team. *Carl Withler, P.Ag*



President George Geldart, P.Ag. hands Okanagan Branch Achievement award to Rob Dinwoodie, P.Ag.. Well done Rob!!!



Reg Whiten, P.Ag. receives his 25 year certificate from Lori Vickers, P.Ag. and Chelsea Mottishaw, P.Ag. at the Peace River Branch AGM in January.



Don Rugg, Acting Registrar, presents Jodi Axelson with her P.Ag. certificate at the BCIA office in Victoria.

[Register now](#) for the 70th BCIA Conference being held in Abbotsford.

Get involved! Ask about volunteering at the conference.
For more information, go to [BCIA - News](#)