

Environmentalists regroup and rename

Squamish Environmental Society adds economic development to strategy

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The Squamish Environmental Society (SES) shaved the "Conservation" from its working name as it discussed ways to strengthen green unity in the community at its annual general meeting on Monday (Nov. 2).

About 50 veteran and new members gathered at the Brackendale Art Gallery to vote in five new board members and direct questions to a panel of local environmentalists in an attempt to better understand the organization's strategies and goals.

As part of its restructuring, SES added a green economic development program to its strategic goals of conservation and education.

The additional program is still in the envisioning stages, but it is designed to support and encourage sustainable business and business practices that are environmentally friendly and contribute to a sustainable local economy.

"We see the whole environmental movement going towards more of a sustainable model," said SES president Catherine Jackson.

"And we can't really think about saving the trees without thinking about where the economics of our communi-

ty are coming from."

A major theme that prevailed throughout the discussion was the idea of fostering unity amongst Squamish's environmental groups in order to reenergize green thinking. From the Squamish Climate Action Network (CAN) to the Squamish River Watershed Society, there are a number of environmental organizations with particular niches.

And while specialising in a particular area of interest is effective, there should be events created to bring all the groups together in a show of collective concern.

"I think the diversity within Squamish is one of the things that I've really come to appreciate over the last couple of decades that I've been

I can't believe it now... you see the majority of people now carrying around their own tote bags.

Graham Fuller



Squamish Environmental Society members ask panelists questions during the groups annual general meeting at the Brackendale Art Gallery on Monday (Nov. 2). From right to left: president Catherine Jackson, Coun. Patricia Heintzman, Chris Joseph, Victor Elderton, Marcia Danielson and Kimberley Armour.

here," said panellist Victor Elderton, principal of the North Vancouver Outdoor School.

"There's a cohesive core within each group but the problem is that they don't get together."

SES member Graham Fuller suggested organizing a local "green summit" of sorts to create a public show of collaborative force.

In pointing out the power of green initiatives that start out small but build when more groups get on board, Fuller referred to Tracey Saxby's reusable grocery bag campaign, which started little more than a year ago.

"I can't believe it now that you walk into any grocery store in this town, any social background, and you see the majority of people now carrying around their own tote bags. This is astonishing and it shows that things can change," he said.

The campaign to rid Squamish of plastic bags is an example of keen social marketing, which is significant to changing collective environmental perspectives, said panellist, District of Squamish

Coun. Patricia Heintzman.

She admitted the District of Squamish needs to rethink the way it performs its duties and urged SES members to pursue environmental initiatives without hesitation.

"I really believe that most initiatives start at the grassroots level. By the time politicians actually get their brains around it, there's usually an under-swelling of movement already," she said.

New SES leadership was voted for at the meeting, with Sarah Greenwood, Roland Semjanovs, Lisa Prinic, Theresa Negrieff and David Crewson entering as board members.

They join current directors Jackson and Sandra Bicego, while Mary Mitchell continues as treasurer.

Board members' specific positions will be determined at the group's next meeting, which has yet to be announced.

Visit the group's website at squamishenvironment.ca for future details.

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