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President's Report September 2015

The North Columbia Environmental Society's purpose is to promote sustainable living and protection of the natural environment in the North Columbia region.

In working towards our vision of Revelstoke as a thriving community that recognizes the interdependence of environmental, economic and social well-being, and in our actions to promote stewardship of the natural environment throughout the North Columbia region, we strive to adhere to the following guiding principles:

- Being informed;
- Offering positive and creative solutions;
- Using collaborative and peaceful methods of working towards our goals;
- Being approachable;
- Using open, transparent and respectful communications and actions;
- Persevering to achieve change; and
- Being focused, proactive, responsive and realistic.

Reflections on my first year as President:

This has been a challenging year. One of the only certainties in life is change, and we had our fair share within the NCES during the 2014/2015 year: Two new people joined the board (Gina and Alison), both in executive roles (Treasurer and Secretary); Mel stepped into the NCES Coordinator role after Amy moved onto a position with Parks Canada; the LFI Committee became its own society and we now have 4 board positions to fill, including the spot left open by Sarah Newton's departure.

While the LFI has now branched off, the Conservation Committee started meeting regularly and almost immediately came up with a long wish list of issues to address, projects to undertake and future initiatives to keep on our radar. We have been challenged by the extent of work that the Conservation Committee wants to take on and finding the time and capacity to do justice to the great ideas and passion being brought forward.

Other changes included using a new bookkeeping system as an attempt to simplify the treasurer and budgeting role. Unfortunately, this was not much of a success. Fortunately, with the LFI funds now being managed separately, the NCES finances should be somewhat simplified, so it is a good time for us to give this another try. Much of what I believe needs to be done to build a stronger organization involves minimizing the duplication of efforts and making our administrative procedures, from budgeting, bookkeeping, membership management, reporting to funders and writing grant applications more streamlined.

I have spent much time over the past few months thinking about how to address the real possibility that the NCES is simply being stretched beyond its capacity. We are an organization that is so aware of the importance of sustainability in so many ways, yet I feel we need to stop and get a better handle on our own sustainability. The good news is that the time is right to do this work. Through the CBT's Non-Profit Support Program, Mel and I are going to work with the CBT to figure out the best way to do this and get some assistance to get some best practices in place for the NCES. We are also overdue for some strategic planning. We have some base level programs that we will keep running, but the next year might be heavily focused on tuning up the administrative side of the NCES because we need to get a strong foundation laid to make sure that we are being as effective as we can be – both now and into the future. The NCES just turned 15. It is a well established organization with a lot of history. Let's make sure it continues to be active, thrive and evolve. Wouldn't it be great to see a past GASP student or Jr. Naturalist participant get the chance to start working for the NCES as a contractor or maybe even be on the Board in the future!

CURRENT BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Jody Lownds, President

Sarah Newton, Past President

Fraser Blyth, Vice President and Chair of Sustainable Living Committee

Jen Greenwood, Director of Conservation and Chair of Conservation Committee

Nadja Luckau, Director of Memberships

Ron Glave, Director of Communications

Gina Cawthorpe, Secretary

Alison Lambert, Treasurer

MEMBERS:

91 paid members, including 20 family memberships and 38 lifetime memberships (in 2014 we had 116 paid members)

VOLUNTEERS:

We have approximately 40 regularly active volunteers including the members of the Board of Directors, volunteer efforts by paid staff who often go above and beyond what they are paid to do, Sustainable Living Committee members and Conservation Committee members. In addition to this, we have approximately 10 volunteers who show up to help out with one-off types of events that they are most interested in (e.g. the volunteer time that goes into the Farm to Table program) as well as the GASP Students who select to do their stewardship hours through NCES events and programs.

Volunteer hours put in this year are about on par with the previous year (at least 2500 hours of volunteer time being a conservative estimate).

SUB COMMITTEES:

Conservation Committee (chaired by Jennifer Greenwood)
Sustainable Living Committee (chaired by Fraser Blythe)
Local Food Initiative ** (previously chaired by Amy Clarke, now by Nadja Luckau)

**the LFI is now a separate Society and is no longer a sub-committee of the NCES

MEETINGS:

Monthly meetings, as needed committee meetings, AGM in September

COMMUNICATIONS:

Email	Website	NCES & SLC Facebook
Event posters	Stoke List	Eco-Fact sheets
Library	Booth at Local Events	Newspaper articles

411 likes on our NCES Facebook page and 156 likes on our NCES Sustainable Living Committee Facebook pages.

2014/2015 CONTRACTORS:

Agathe Bernard. Sustainable Living Committee Coordinator. Agathe brings fantastic photography skills, a science (geology) background, and new social-media ideas to the NCES as well as great energy and enthusiasm. Agathe also participated in the GASP weekend as a nature photography instructor.

Amy Clarke. NCES Coordinator (past), Garden Guru, Downtown Community Garden, Garden & Art Tour and RVAC Coordinator. Amy has been an integral part of the NCES and we were very sad to see her go. Her organizational skills, ideas and energy kept us on track through a challenging year and we will be forever grateful for the amount of time and effort she put into dealing various website issues, among other behind the scenes-type jobs.

Melissa Hemphill. NCES Coordinator (present). Mel was our serendipitous applicant for the NCES Coordinator position when we were looking for Amy's replacement. Mel is just great. She is diligent, hard working, dedicated, full of fantastic ideas (too many sometimes) and she brought an integral knowledge about the organization and all of our programs with her so that she could step into the NCES Coordinator role as seamlessly as possible. As she is also the LFI Coordinator, rest assured the two organizations will continue to grow independently, but in a symbiotic way.

Robyn Hooper. Feasibility study for LFI Social Enterprise. Robyn looked into a variety of ideas to allow the LFI to be less dependent on grant funding. The LFI is working hard to implement these ideas into money-making projects.

Jesse Johnston-Hill. Farm to Table Coordinator (High School): Jesse has been running this program now for 3 years and she continues to do a fantastic job of engaging all different ages of students and getting them to care about, and be interested in, local and organic food. Jesse's passion for this project shone through in her grant applications and she secured funding for the Farm to Table Program, the Food Camp and has dreamed up a new partnership that will see students working with Mt. Cartier Court Residents to build a sustainable garden. The sky is the limit for what this young woman will bring to our community in the years to come.

Matt Kieller. Junior Naturalists & GASP Coordinator. Matt never ceases to amaze us with what he has done to build up the Junior Naturalists program -- both the summer program, the after school program, and now ideas and hopes to run a winter program. Matt will likely be doing less work for us as he will be attending teacher's college, but we hope he will continue to be involved with the NCES as much as he is able. Based on what he has accomplished with the children and youth he has worked with through the Jr. Naturalist Program and the GASP program, it is more than clear that he is a natural educator and youth leader.

Jenn Meens. Kokanee Fish Festival & RVAC Garden. Jenn has been running the KFF program now for the last 4 years and it is always a success. It is a pleasure for the Board to be able to leave this event in Jenn's capable hands and know it will go off without a hitch. Jenn has also become a valuable contractor with the LFI, leading the new community garden at the Visual Arts Centre to a blooming success in its first growing year.

Mariah Mihok. Bike Swap Coordinator. This was our second year for this event and Mariah did a great job of bringing it together in a short amount of time. Her energy and enthusiasm was great and we hope she will do more work for us in the future.

Laura Stovel, New Horizons (Accessible Garden and Landshare Coordinator) and Sustainable Living Committee Coordinator. Laura never ceases to amaze us with her energy, ideas and initiative to make things happen. She is not only one of our most experienced contractors but also one of our most dedicated volunteers.

Erin Wilkins. Garden Guru Coordinator and Hunting & Gathering Guru Series (new – this year) Coordinator. As a past Board Member, Erin has a good feel for the NCES organization and our goals. She is an easy person to trust to take an idea or program, run with it, and make it a success. It is a pleasure to have her continuing to work with us.

Local Issues of Significance to the NCES:

- Lack of a Conservation Officer for our region (looked into Bear training for RCMP)
- Angling Infractions & circulating info about the RAPP line in the absence of a CO
- Columbia River Treaty Review Process (what is happening, ensuring local engagement)
- Chicken bylaw (climate change action, food security)
- Management of the Upper Arrow Reservoir Drawdown Zone (the flats), particularly relating to motorized recreation, littering and destruction/disturbance of habitat and wildlife
- Existing and proposed local gravel pits (toxic dust and noise pollution)
- Environmental Assessment re: the 6th Generating Unit proposed for Revelstoke Dam
- Lack of locations/resources in Revelstoke to deal with Hazardous Waste disposal
- Proposed LNG conversion in Revelstoke
- Logging at Mt. MacPherson (requested better/new land use plan for that area and better LUP process in general with community engagement).
- Downie's Pest Management Plan/use of pesticides
- Waste Management (incl. littering) at RMR
- Waste reduction (overall) and waste management by City (integrated recycling, composting, solid waste pick-up)

NCES Partnered Projects:

Revelstoke Caribou Rearing in the Wild (RCRW)

RCRW is a truly community-based conservation project, comprised of a cross-section of organizations (Revelstoke Community Forest Corporation, MoFLNR, NCES, Revelstoke Snowmobile Club, Splatsin First Nation, Parks Canada, Heli & Cat Ski Operations) committed to the recovery of mountain caribou in the Revelstoke area. RCRW's goal and sole focus is to fundraise, plan and conduct a maternity penning project, to increase caribou calf survival in the North Columbia Mountains over a five-year period. This past year was the second year of the pilot project and, in mid July, 17 adult caribou and 11 calves were released from the pen. There were some mortalities in the pen prior to release and RCRW has initiated an independent review of procedures to see what improvements can be made for the upcoming season. Jody Lownds is the NCES Director who sits on the RCRW Board of Directors as Secretary.

Earthday Treeplant and ScreenSmart Activities

More information regarding these events/projects is below. Both took place in partnership with CSISS (Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society)

GASP Program

More information regarding this program is set out below. GASP is run in partnership with Parks Canada, Community Connections and Revelstoke Secondary School.

Gleaning Project

The LFI works closely with Bear Aware to harvest local fruit, make it into products for the food bank, and keep bears out of urban areas.

Info Night re: Selkirk Mountain Caribou Park Proposal

In partnership with the Valhalla Wilderness Society, Craig Pettit came to give a presentation regarding VWS' proposed Selkirk Mountain Caribou Park. This led to an interesting discussion regarding the history of their efforts as well as sharing information regarding the unique Incomappleux valley. There was a follow-up discussion after the presentation with the Conservation Committee regarding potential ways to support VWS' efforts, possibly work together in the future and bring awareness to the importance of the Incomappleux.

Representation on Local and Regional Stakeholder Committees:

Columbia River Treaty Canadian Caucus and International Roundtable with US Groups
Columbia Basin Regional Advisory Committee*

BC Hydro's Rev 6 Core Committee Process

Revelstoke Caribou Rearing in the Wild Society Board of Directors

City of Revelstoke Environmental Advisory Committee*

City of Revelstoke Advisory Planning Commission*

*NCES Board members sit on these Committees in their individual capacity, not as the North Columbia Environmental Society

NCES Programs, Events and Initiative Highlights:

Glacier Adventure Stewardship Program- May to October (coordinator)

In its fourth year and attracting 18 students in the age range of 15-17, the GASP program continues to be a huge success. Matt Kieller coordinated the students in their volunteering, each doing 15 hours of community oriented environmental stewardship activities in order to participate in a 3 day backcountry hut trip. They were taught by a host of local experts about back country skills (topographic map use and route planning, GPS use and geocaching, tree identification, fire building, camp stove use, bear encounter preparedness, communication and leadership) and nature photography. The weekend and all the hard work put in by the students and volunteers culminates in a photo exhibit at the Revelstoke Visual Arts Centre in October.

Junior Naturalists Summer and Spring (after school) Programs- (coordinator)

The Revelstoke Jr. Naturalist program is a youth based educational program, with a curriculum based on the fundamentals of natural science, taught in a fun and engaging outdoor environment. The summer program ran on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings from 9am until noon. A total of 8 classes were taught and topics included wonders of weather, invasive species and biodiversity, pollinators, avian populations, aquatic invertebrates, mapping and orienteering, forest ecology and animal tracking. Program locations varied from the green belt, Skunk Cabbage boardwalk, Mt. Revelstoke Ski Chalet, Monashee lookout, to the BC Interior Forestry Museum.

The Spring after school program ran for six-weeks at Begbie View Elementary. The sessions took place from 3:00 -4:30pm on Wednesday afternoons from May 20th –June 24th. Planning began in April, primarily involving marketing and promotion. This was completed with hard copy posters and social media, as well as working with the Begbie View parents committee. Programs included: Going Fishing: Fresh water fish species around Revelstoke; Avian Adventures; Alternative Energy Sources and Solar Powered Vehicles; Map Reading and GPS 101; Microscopes and the World Beyond Our Eyes; and Tree and Shrub Identification. The program was run free of cost, to increase the inclusiveness of the program. Once again we had very successful results with attendance ranging from 6-12 students per program, with the majority of students attending every program. Overall the program had 24 students participate.

Sustainable Living Workshops- ongoing (contractor and volunteer)

Starting with an overview of energy alternatives, talks on energy alternatives (solar, hydro, etc.), minimalist living, biomass, heat pumps, insulation, green home tours, etc. These workshops were organized by the Sustainable Living Committee. This year they also started the first of hopefully many Fix-it-Fairs.

Screen Smart Challenge- May 25th week (volunteer)

Organized a nature run on the greenbelt with a bit of orienteering. Small turnout this year – plan for next year to have a water table and nature hunt at BVE right after school.

NCES book lending library at Sangha Bean- ongoing (volunteer)

Books & videos re:the environment and sustainability are lent out to local residents.

Conservation Blog on our Website (volunteer)

Started in March 2014 and we have added an article on average once a month. The articles have ranged from wildlife viewing opportunities around Revelstoke to information regarding humming birds and educating people about new fishing regulations.

Earth Day- April (volunteer)

- 1) Art Contest “Keeping Nature Natural”. About 200 students participated. Winners from each grade level (K to 7) received a t-shirt or stuffie from RMR and a BC Hydro magnet set about energy conservation. Overall winners also got gift certificates from Universal Footwear. RMR is making 3 or 4 of the posters into signs for the chairlift.
- 2) Tree Plant hosted on April 23rd (trees provided by Stella Jones and facilitated by Landra Lamacchia; partnered with CSISS). About 100 students planted trees during the school day and another 20+ kids and families planted during the afternoon public session. Event was on the front page of the Times Review.

Kokanee Fish Festival; September 26, 2014 (coordinator)

At Bridge Creek, grade 2's in Revelstoke spend half a day learning about salmon spawning and other related topics. Booths hosted by several organizations featured learning and activities including endangered fish species and life cycle games, running games, fish prints and art, fish dissection, water modelling, aboriginal education, bear aware activities, etc. About 150 students (from Begbie View Elementary, Columbia Park Elementary, Arrow Heights Elementary and Revelstoke Homeschool Group) took part in this annual event (more than double the previous year's participation).

Bike Swap- spring (coordinator)

NCES hosts the buying and selling of bikes and equipment in order to foster and encourage sustainable transportation growth in our community. A well attended event (150 – 200) that we would still like to build up to be more of a money maker (this past spring we essentially broke even). Partnered with Skookum and RCA.

Bike Giveaway- spring (Volunteer)

In partnership with the RCMP and Flowt Bikes and Skis, refurbished, abandoned bikes were given away to residents in need of a bicycle. Partnered with Community Connections and Okanagan College Settlement Assistance Program to select recipients.

NCES newsletter- Quarterly (volunteer)

E-publications that announce events, local environmental issues, volunteer opportunities, and NCES/ Community activities.

LFI Programs, Events and Initiative Highlights:

Establishing the Revelstoke Local Food Initiative Society- (volunteer)

I do not want to gloss over the amount of planning, meetings, coordination and volunteer hours that went into getting the LFI up and running as its own society. We feel this was a good and necessary move that will allow the LFI to thrive and focus on the work they do best and to ensure that the NCES is able to stay focused on conservation work, sustainable living and environmental education initiatives and projects. We look forward to continuing to work together as equal partners on many projects. The NCES & LFI have agreed to share our Media Library and Food Processing Equipment amongst members in addition to offering joint memberships. NCES members can become LFI members for an additional \$10 (Annual members) or \$25 (Lifetime members).

Garden and Art Tour- August 2014 (coordinator)

The NCES hosted a self-directed tour of 11 homes and 9 artists, to celebrate and share strategies for growing your own food in an urban environment. This event was a resounding success with over 120 following our event maps from venue to venue, mostly on their bicycles.

Food Processing Equipment Lending- (volunteer)

To inspire and facilitate local food preservation, Big Mountain Kitchen hosts a variety of equipment such as dehydrators, canners and fruit presses available to members to borrow for free.

Little Sprouts- (volunteer)

This program aims to teach preschool-aged children where their food comes from and how to grow their own food. By going to a preschool and hosting events at the downtown community garden (where the little sprouts have two garden plots) we were able to reach 90 children.

Incredible Edibles Film Series- winter, early spring (volunteer)

A winter film series on topics of local interest and to do with sustainable food production. Films included Ingredients, Dive and Just Eat It. Great turn out and engaging guest speakers that helped bring a local flavour to each film. A whirlwind of LFI volunteers organized this event.

Visual Arts Centre Garden- Ongoing (contractor)

In partnership with the Revelstoke Visual Arts Centre and their outdoor renovation project, the LFI has built eight garden boxes in the establishment of Revelstoke's second community garden. This new location will allow more people to grow their own food, with a large portion of produce going to the Food Bank. This is an excellent partnership with the Visual Arts Society which helps to create a beautiful outdoor celebration space.

Farm to Table (High School)- (Contractor)

The 2014/15 Program introduced the food systems, ecological health, and agricultural impacts as a means of teaching Revelstoke’s youth about how to reduce their environmental impact and conserve ecosystems by making better food choices.

Through a field trip to Terra Firma Farm the students saw how agriculture depends on a healthy ecosystem and the many services they provide; as well as, how a well-managed farm can contribute beneficially to the surrounding environment. This program visited 3 classrooms, with 3 modules taught in Science 10, and 1 module for Foods Lab 11/12 in mid-September.

Farm to Table (Elementary)- (Contractor)

The 2014/2015 Program involved 4 grade 4 classes, with each class receiving four modules. The aim of this program is to teach students about sustainability through a food lens. Connections are made between food choices and the impact of these choices on climate change. The modules included classroom visits to teach about climate change and the different aspects of food production, transportation and sales that impact the environment. The students were then taken to the grocery store and the farmer's market where they can compare products available at these two outlets. Another field trip to a local farm completes their understanding of the impact of their food choices. Students were given worksheets to complete at each location then asked to create a poster to summarize their learning.

Funding Sources:

General Funds:

Membership dues
Cash donations
Event revenue

Grants:

CBT Community Initiatives TD Friends of Environment
CBT Youth Initiative Revelstoke Credit Union
New Horizons MEC
Revelstoke Community Foundation

In Kind Donations:

Thanks to NCES contractor efforts and a very generous community of individuals and businesses who have given substantial in-kind donations of labour, time, materials, and property.

Thank you all for everyone’s contributions to the North Columbia Environmental Society over the past year, it is a fantastic organization and I’m grateful to get to be a part of it.

Jody Lownds

President, North Columbia Environmental Society
Revelstoke BC, September 29, 2015