

# IT IS TIME FOR CHANGE AND FOR ACTION

From Jim Posynick, Outgoing Chair of KCDCS

## **Change = Opportunity**

I have been Chair of KCDCS for several years. It is now time for me to retire and turn my attention to some postponed personal goals and objectives. Looking back I can see that we, the Board of Directors, achieved many of the Society's goals and objectives, among them charitable status, the development of a temporary environmental education facility to continue seasonal programs, the establishment of many key relationships, the creation of a strong social media presence and a greatly increased membership.

Board capacity has grown remarkably since inception in 2015. The Directors have learned a great deal about developing a new, modern wetland education centre especially the importance of collaborating with governments, private businesses and like-minded organizations. One recent milestone was KCDCS' sponsorship of a Reconciliation Workshop for us and for Directors from several other local non-profits.

KCDCS will now take some fresh steps under new leadership. I know the community will welcome the new Chair, Phil Harvey with the same enthusiasm and support I received. Phil and some existing Directors will have the benefit of working with several newly appointed Directors, all of whom bring a wealth of knowledge, experience and enthusiasm to the project. All of these developments bode well for the future success of the Discovery Centre project. I leave the project knowing it is in good hands and without regret.

There are many reasons this community should embrace the changes at KCDCS. Change offers the opportunity to review progress and set new goals. It offers the opportunity to re-engage old, and establish new, relationships. It is a good time for Directors and our membership to speak to each other and share their own views about KSCDS' future. It is also good time for community members of all kinds to come together to support this immensely worthwhile project.

## **Action = Results**

At no time in human history has our environmental future been more uncertain. The World Health Organization's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded that "Climate change is the single biggest health threat facing humanity..." and that action is needed to avoid

“millions of climate change related deaths”. Perhaps it is a bit difficult to digest that statement while we are in the midst of a world-wide pandemic. Consider this: unlike Covid19, there is no vaccine that will save the planet, you, your family, friends, children or grandchildren from the impacts of climate-change. The only remedy is action.

As you sit back in the comfort of your fossil-fuel-heated home with the 4x4 parked in the driveway, you might be thinking “Hey! It’s government’s job to take action”. Well good luck with that. How did governments do with the pandemic *before* we experienced its dire consequences? Consider this: the world has experienced plagues, cholera, influenza, SARS, MERS et al over centuries. History is replete with warnings about them. How well, if at all, did governments prepare for them? Evidently, not much.

So with recent government inaction fresh in our minds, what action should we be pressing government to take to lessen the potential for catastrophic climate change impacts? Here’s a thought: what if governments supported KCDCS’ efforts to raise the environmental IQ of children and adults? Would our situation be different if more people had an appreciation for our natural environment; if they understood that the natural resources we take for granted are finite; if they could see the interconnectedness between human activity and the health of the environment? Would making environmental education more accessible, interesting and hands-on inspire people to learn how to create a better future for themselves and their families; to make sound personal and political decisions in the face of so much misinformation from (irrational) economically and ideologically biased organizations?

I believe the answer to those questions is “yes”. I believe it as an act of faith that most humans are not consumed by self-gratification and self-interest to the point where they are willing to ruin the planet, or stand by and watch it being ruined, for future generations. Realistically, that act of faith does not extend to those politicians and government leaders who spend far too much time worrying about their careers and focusing on corporate (party) success. It will take community action, action by individuals, businesses and community organizations working together, to get government leaders working with us to achieve the Vision of a modern wetland education facility, here in the Creston Valley.

### **How can you help?**

If you support KCDCS let your local, regional, provincial, federal and Band governments know. Email, call, text or talk to your elected representatives. Ask them what they have done to support KCDCS’ to date and what they plan to do now; not later, “now”. If you get an answer,

why not share it on our Website or on social media? If you do not get an answer, share that too. Why? Because too often we walk away from the silence of our leaders as though it is an acceptable form of communication. It is not. In the context of taking meaningful action to prevent harm to people and the planet, silence is unhelpful, rude and selfish. On the other hand, dialogue that shares ideas, seeks mutual interests and a means to collaborate creates trust and opportunities for community action. Insist, persevere and demand your leaders respond. It is their job to do so.

Of course it is not only government that can help this project move forward. Industry and business, especially local businesses, financial institutions and the Columbia Basin Trust (CBT) all bear some responsibility to support a project like this one. Why? Because they benefit from the labor, income, investments and expenditures of the people of this valley and this region, directly. Creston has some very fine and generous businesses who contribute funding and in-kind services to local non-profits. Local financial institutions, i.e. the RBC, the CIBC and the Credit Union say they support local community projects but their contribution in this valley is minimal compared to the record profits they earned during the pandemic. In August, RBC had 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter profits of \$4B<sup>1</sup> and the CIBC \$1.7B<sup>2</sup>. In 2020 CDCU's assets grew by \$19.1M, its cash and equivalents grew by \$19.5M<sup>3</sup>.

There is a theory with fundraising for large projects which, I am told anecdotally, has some basis in fact. The theory is if one financial institution or government makes a substantial contribution toward development, others will follow suit. Why not ask your financial institution to be the first to make a significant donation? There is a good chance others will follow.

We also have a few large businesses here in the valley that have made huge profits during the pandemic. How much beer, pot and building products (e.g.) have been sold during the past 20 months? Is there some reason those businesses cannot donate to the Discovery Centre project?

And what about the Columbia Basin Trust ("CBT")? It's Mission Statement says: "[the] Columbia Basin Trust supports efforts by the people of the Basin to create a legacy of social, economic and environmental well-being and to achieve greater self-sufficiency for present and future generations". It is true that the CBT contributed 5 years of operational funding to KCDCS and for that we are thankful; however, it will run out at the end of 2022 so there is a real

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<sup>1</sup> <https://globalnews.ca/news/7901944/canada-banks-earnings-q2/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/td-cibc-earnings-1.6153974>

<sup>3</sup> 2020 Annual Report, p.10

danger of losing the environmental education programming that has been ongoing in the Valley since the mid-1970's. Moreover, the funding was specifically called "transitional" in nature. It was intended to bridge the transition between the destruction of the former Interpretive Centre to the completion of a new Discovery Centre.

KCDCS and hundreds of students and other program participants owe the CBT a great big debt of gratitude. But is there some reason the community should not expect its financial help to fund the steps necessary to build a new Discovery Centre? If their Mission Statement is to be taken seriously, they must be a primary contributor to a project that will provide environmental, economic, social and cultural benefits to the entire region. Send the CBT an email. Tell them how important this project is to you and your family.

I have talked a lot about dollar contributions from government and industry but in-kind support is just as important. Offering professional services is a great way to help this complex project get done.

Big projects are bound to have big challenges but if governments, financial institutions and the community work with KCDCS the result will be spectacular. It all begins with dialogue. Lets get talking, people. KCDCS will buy the coffee and donuts, I'm sure.

Wishing everyone in the valley, especially KCDCS supporters, a happy, healthy environmental future. Come-on, Creston Valley! Don't let the Vision die; *Non carborundum!*