

Trustee Notebook

By Laura Busheikin



Islands Trust

Mysteries of Trust Council Revealed

People sometimes ask me just what we Trustees do at Trust Council meetings and how it relates to Denman Island. It's a good question. To help answer it, here is a report from September's Council session on Bowen Island:

I'll begin with a quick micro-orientation: Trust Council consists of 26 Trustees from 13 Trust areas (encompassing 465 Islands). We meet four times per year, each time on a different Island, for three intensive days of briefings, continuing education, decision-making, and interaction with constituents.

Here are three highlights from September's Trust Council:

1) A decision: the biggie in September was the adoption of the 2011- 2014 Strategic Plan. This 10 page document defines the Trust's priorities; if an item is in the Plan, then staff time, Council time and funding will flow in that direction. The Strategic Plan is a guide, not a prescription; Local Trust Committees still have the autonomy to set their own priorities.

Denman readers will probably be interested to know that two items of special interest to this Island were included: "advocacy with respect to the potential impacts of the Raven Coal Mine" and "advocate for appropriate regulation of aquaculture." The coal mine discussion was further supported by a delegation from Denman Opposes Coal. Thank to DOC members for making the trip to Bowen.

And thanks to all the Islanders who submitted comments during the Strategic Plan consultation process — this was a great help.

2) Education: oil spill response. Just what would happen if there was an oil spill on our shores? This question looms large in the Trust area these days, thanks to the Kinder Morgan and Enbridge pipeline proposals. To find out, Trustees participated in a presentation and beachside demonstration by the Western Canada Marine Response Corporation (WCMRC).

All marine vessels are required by Transport Canada to have a contract with an organization that will respond to an oil spill. In our area, that's WCMRC. It works with the responsible party, the Coast Guard, Transport Canada and others, contributing its boats, skimmers, booms, and other equipment, its skilled personnel and its network of trained contractors spread throughout the region.

Although I was impressed with the professionalism of WCMRC, I can't say I found the presentation entirely reassuring. They promise oil spill response, not clean up — because 'clean' is not a realistic expectation. A major oil

spill would inevitably be an environmental catastrophe. Above all we need to prevent them.

Through its public outreach program, WCMRC visits communities to give workshops and gather information to help set up a detailed area plan that would include essential information such as where to launch vessels or anchor a boom, who to contact locally for assistance and communications, and where to find equipment. They could conceivably come to Denman if there is interest.

As well, WCMRC welcomes members of the public to its quarterly training sessions in various BC locations. More info is available at www.wcmrc.com.

3) A delegation (and decision): establishing a Federal Department of Peace.

Lisa Barret, former Mayor of Bowen Island Municipality, asked Council to support the Canadian branch of this global movement, which encompasses over 35 countries, with successes thus far in Nepal, Costa Rica and the Solomon Islands. In Canada, it is supported by the NDP Federal Caucus, the Green Party, many prominent individuals, and dozens of peace and social justice organizations.

Key to the movement is Bill 373, a private member's bill which passed first reading in the House of Commons last November. Recently, Victoria city council passed a resolution calling for Bill 373's approval.

The Department of Peace mandate would range from promoting international peace-keeping to encouraging a culture of peace within Canada through actions like restorative justice and peace education. One goal is to support the transition from a war-based to a peace-based economy — quite a compelling idea when we consider that Canada's military spending is close to 24 billion dollars, its highest level since WWII.

This delegation spurred some interesting discussion. Some Trustees commented that this was such a motherhood issue that it was meaningless, and that the idea of the current Federal Government creating a Department of Peace bordered on Orwellian, but ultimately a large majority voted to "give peace a chance." Find more info on the Canadian Department of Peace Initiative at www.departmentofpeace.ca/.

There was of course much, much more, including a hotly debated recommendation to raise application fees (this ended up being sent back to a committee for more discussion and will likely come to Trust Council again). Find more info at www.islandstrust.bc.ca and/or talk to me or Trustee David Graham.