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# Whistler2020 ON THE GROUND

## Sowing the seeds of social intercourse

by **Kevin Damaskie**  
RMOW Policy and Program Development

**I**t's all about the dirt. Well, at least that's the root of it all.

The cycle of life starts and ends with the Earth, and what is Earth other than life-giving dirt, and what is life if it doesn't involve eating?

In Sea to Sky Country a modern movement is afoot, but oddly enough it's quite old. This movement is about food. Not the golden arches kind of food, but the golden fields kind. The kind grown, marketed and eaten locally. Before farming became agribusiness, before ranches became feedlots and before people lost touch with the source of their food.

The best place to start discussing local food is with local First Nations people. In a 1975 book called Lillooet Stories, Charlie Mack, a revered Lil'wat elder, explained some of the food bounty yielded this time of year. "In the spring, when the ground thawed, the Mount Currie people would leave their underground houses and go out to dig roots. First, they dug the root of the skunk cabbage, HU-tl, and prepared it to eat. In the meadow they dug the root of the cat-tail plant; this root, called TLO-la-wh, is quite long. After a fire is built, the cat-tail roots were placed in it to singe off the outer covering. Then, the inner covering was peeled to expose the edible inner portion; this was one of the most delicious roots that the people dug in the spring."

From soapberries to Sockeye salmon, the Earth provided for countless generations and food sites were protected as sacred. Then, somehow, somewhere, we lost this vital connection to the Earth and

the food it provides. The simple, but powerful, message in Mack's story is sustain the Earth and she will sustain you. There's some food for thought.

A common bond throughout Sea to Sky Country is our links to agriculture and now we have the opportunity to strengthen that bond through the food that connects our communities.

Early last century, Squamish was known as Newport. Cattle trod the downtown boardwalks at high tide and farmers at the North end of Howe Sound produced world famous hops for British breweries (they still grow in downtown Squamish backyards today).

Pemberton's Mayor, Jordan Sturdy, is a farmer first and politician second.

Whistler's first employee housing neighbourhood, Tapley's Farm, exists on the fertile flatland which was exactly that.

In the 1925 declaration of the Pemberton Valley Farmers' Institute, five local farmers put together a plan for spud valley being followed to this day. The Institute's objectives included: improving the conditions of rural life; promoting social intercourse, mutual helpfulness, and the diffusion of knowledge; promoting the theory and practice of agriculture; and making new settlers welcome, among others\*. Created to promote, expand and protect agricultural opportunities, their society could easily become the foundation of a Sea to Sky food task force as their mission is still a laudable goal today.

Pemberton's Anna Helmer and Lisa Richardson have taken this mandate and modernized it through the highly successful Slow Food Cycle Sunday; the third annual festival will take place Aug.

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## HIT back on the job

HABITAT IMPROVEMENT TEAM NOT AFRAID TO GET DIRTY

Local environmentalists can put their old clothes and shoes where their mouths are this summer as the Whistler-Blackcomb Habitat Improvement Team (HIT) gets back to work on environmental projects.

This is the 10th anniversary since HIT was created, and to date volunteers have donated 72 Tuesday evenings to projects as diverse as wetlands restoration, trail maintenance and hanging bird houses. Sometimes the projects are done in partnership with other local groups, like the Whistler Fisheries Stewardship Group and Whistler Naturalists. An average of 15 volunteers turn out for each project, spending about three hours.

HIT has already completed the first of eight projects slated for 2007, with the June 12 clean-up of the Northwest Passage Trail that connects Whistler Creekside to Whistler Village.

The next project, slated for June 26, is

in the Whistler Interpretive Forest, across the highway from Function Junction. Crews will clear encroaching brush and perform erosion control on the trails used by hikers, bikers and runners.

Other projects planned for this year include packaging clothes and other items for an aid project in Romania, trail maintenance of Singing Pass, in-stream and riparian work on Crabapple Creek, riparian planting on River of Golden Dreams, and a project in Pemberton. Reminders will be published in upcoming issues of Pique.

If you can spare a few hours, HIT meets every second Tuesday at 5:45 p.m. outside of Merlin's at the base of Blackcomb, and leaves by 6 p.m. for the project site. All equipment and supplies are provided by Whistler-Blackcomb.

Work wraps up by 9 p.m., after which point crews head back to Merlin's for refreshments. ■

## Whistler 2020

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19, 2007.

"It seems to be all coming full circle," says Richardson. "The environmental crisis we are in right now actually has a positive upside as we can reconnect with the food from our land. This is something which became disconnected over two short generations... if we leave it too long we're going to lose it."

The Whistler2020 Health and Social Strategy sums up this goal quite well in one component of its description of success: "Chemical-free, organically-grown food produced in the Sea-to-Sky Corridor is available year-round at a price affordable to community members." This spring, the task force recommended that the highly successful community greenhouse program at Spruce Grove be replicated for Spring Creek in 2008. They also

recommended that a consistent Sea to Sky food "brand" be created to increase awareness and uptake in the local market.

These actions, coupled with the success of the annual Cornucopia Food and Wine Festival, farmers markets, the Slow Food Cycle and the increasing number of Sea to Sky restaurants and grocers climbing onboard the "buy local, in season" haywagon, and we are beginning to make the connection between food and the Earth once again. You can taste a local food movement germinating. Let it grow.

To KNOW MORE about other actions that are moving our community toward Whistler2020, or to find out how we're performing visit [www.whistler2020.ca](http://www.whistler2020.ca).

\*"Pemberton: The History of a Settlement," by Frances Decker, Margaret Fougberg and Mary Ronayne. Hemlock Printers Ltd, 1977. Page 137. ■

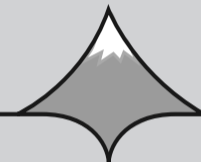
## Whistler Mortgage Company Ltd.

& Roger Stacey are pleased to welcome Vanessa Olson to the company.



Vanessa will be providing mortgage services in the Whistler office and in Squamish where she resides with her husband and daughter.

Vanessa has lived in the Sea to Sky corridor since 1993. Her background as office manager for a local General Contractor for the past 9 years, gives her a comprehensive knowledge of real estate and financing. Her commitment to professional service combined with attention to detail and strong organizational skills ensures that her clients needs are met. Vanessa is committed to helping her clients as a trusted advisor to find the product that will suit their needs.



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