

Responding to Climate Change in our waters

Watershed Wanderings

By Megan Peloso
Pioneer Columnist

Megan Peloso is the Program Co-ordinator for the Lake Windermere Ambassadors. Email her at info@lakeambassadors.ca or call the office at 250-341-6898.



This is the second article in a three-part series to share, tease apart, and think more locally about themes that came out of a recent watersheds forum in Vancouver.

This week, I want to highlight the following statement: "Climate change is accelerating at an alarming rate." This phrase served to urge us into a conversation in our own communities to ask how we are responding to and planning for an uncertain future for water sustainability across B.C.

Throughout the seasons, Lake Windermere reminds us that water changes as the climate does, the relationship is natural and inevitable. Aquatic plants and animals that call the Columbia River home have evolved over time to adapt to a diversity of flows from high to low, between headwaters to lakes to wetlands. Though humans enjoy most of water's

comforts year-round, we too adapt in more subtle ways.

So what does it mean to say that climate change is having an impact on our water future?

The one relatively steady feature of water is its connectivity and renewal, the water cycle. However, through global temperature warming and atmospheric change (an affect of greenhouse gases) the hydrological cycle itself has become less predictable, and is producing more extreme conditions of drought and flooding.

Changes to water availability are experienced unfairly – typically the most vulnerable countries and livelihoods are affected most rapidly and perilously by climate change. On the flip side of the story, there are also examples of governments adapting the rules of water allocation to allow for the preservation of water for nature (and for ourselves), before it's too late.

In South Africa, basic human needs and aquatic ecosystems both have a legal right to water. In New Zealand, the Whanganui River was granted legal personhood, the same rights as a citizen.

Closer to home, the government of the Northwest Territories have adopted a progressive water stewardship strategy that aims to improve water knowledge and create accountability measures to reduce stress to aquatic ecosystems. B.C.'s new Water Sustainability Act has the potential to make new waves for the province to allocate water towards protecting environmental flows.

An environmental flow is the quantity, timing and quality of water flow required to sustain freshwater ecosystems, as well as the human livelihoods and well-being that depend on these ecosystems.

One way the Lake Windermere Ambassadors monitor climate change on Lake Windermere (beyond measuring water temperature) is through Catch the Freeze. This is a fun way to involve our community in the task of recording ice-on and ice-off dates for this important water body. The Lake Windermere Project started recording dates in 2005, and before that they were noted for the practical and cultural purposes of knowing when it was safe to travel on ice, pass by boat, or conduct log drives.

Seasonal differences in the ice cover for lakes and rivers can have a substantial impact on Canada's ecosystems. Changes in the breeding seasons and migration patterns of birds and waterfowl, food supplies for fish and mammals, water temperature along with changes to water chemistry can all occur. Nationally, ice cover can also affect national trade, transportation, outdoor recreation and tourism.

While taking freshwater inventories and learning about how to protect lakes, rivers, and wetlands, our community also needs to learn about our place in that connectivity. What we do with our water knowledge is where the fascinating stuff of our future lies.

Next month, the column will look at the phrase "Mother Earth is healing herself."

... 'Radon Gas' from page 28

In 2012, a province wide study was conducted to test various B.C. regions for radon gas exposure. While the study only tested a limited sample size, it revealed that the Kootenay region is at a very high risk - Invermere has the fourth largest percent of homes with radon gas levels that surpass the World Health Organization's guidelines.

But despite the serious risk to our health, and recent reports of local residents being diagnosed with radon-caused lung cancer, many others are still unaware of its potential threats.

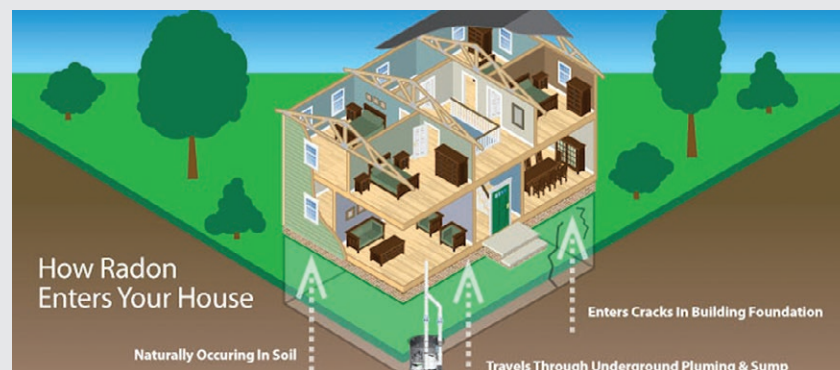
Unfortunately, most people do not find out

that they've been exposed to high levels of radon gas until it is too late. Scientists suspect that 15,000 to 22,000 people in the US have died from it in the last year alone (Canadian data is unavailable).

The only sure-fire way to know if your home has unacceptable levels of gas is to test for it.

On Tuesday, November 15th at 7 pm, join Wildsight and local certified radon expert Nate Sereda from Energy Advise in the DTSS Theatre to learn more about radon gas, its prevalence,

and what you can do to mitigate it. Admission to this event is by donation.



Your Local COLUMBIA VALLEY REAL ESTATE Professionals

MaxWell

Glenn Pomeroy

MaxWell Realty Invermere
1214-7th Avenue, Invermere, B.C.
glennpomeroy@shaw.ca



Cell: (250) 270-0666
Office: (250) 341-6044
Fax: 866-600-0673

Advertise
Here!

www.columbiavalleypioneer.com • info@columbiavalleypioneer.com

The Columbia Valley
PIONEER
NEWSPAPER
8, 1008 8th Ave.
Invermere, B.C.
Ph: (250) 341-6299
Fax: 1-855-377-0312

Wende Brash
Broker/Owner



RE/MAX Invermere
Independently Owned and Operated
1022B - 7th Avenue, Box 459
Invermere B.C. V0A 1K0
E-mail: wendebrash@telus.net
Fax: 250-342-9611



Office: 250-342-6505 • Cell: 250-342-1300