

Celebrating 20 years of environmental protection

By: Cori Lee Miller

November 25, 2009

Cochrane Eagle

When the Cochrane Environmental Action Committee (CEAC) found it's footing 20 years ago in 1989, the environmental movement in Canada was small, but slowly and surely garnering support and growing.

Two decades later it's considered cool, even trendy, to be a lean, green, environmental machine.

CEAC president Tim Giese said these days he is seeing many more people getting involved with environmental causes, but there's still some serious ones to be tackled.

"I think a lot of the low hanging fruit is starting to be captured and now I think we need to get into more serious environmental stuff," he said.

Giese said, for example, many people are recycling, or using low impact lighting "but they're still driving huge cars."

However, Giese said for the most part it seems like people are headed down a path of change as many are "quite concerned and alarmed with what's going on."

Over the past 20 years the group has made progress in Cochrane, from influencing council's environmental decisions, to working on the town's Domtar issues.

"It goes to show you what a small group of these driven, passionate individuals can do," he said. "You don't need an army to make change."

Giese said CEAC has managed to keep a balanced profile, never leaning towards becoming a radical environmental group, something he thinks is key in keeping peoples attention.

"We haven't been marginalized," he said, adding those groups with the most extreme methods are usually the groups people lose interest in.

"As soon as you do that you get tuned out and, no matter how much good work you do, it doesn't matter, you're written off."

The biggest challenge CEAC now faces is finding and keeping new members. Currently, CEAC's members ages range from 40-60, with one member under 30. Giese said for the group to continue, this has to change.

"It just seems to be something that doesn't resonate with young people," he said of environmentalism.

Giese said just how to attract young members to CEAC is "something we've been asking for a long time."

"How do we reach out and get those young kids?"

Giese thinks the answer might just be a click of the computer mouse away. He wants CEAC to reach out through social networking, such as on sites like Facebook, Twitter and MySpace.

Since many high school students are involved with environmental causes at a school level, Giese has hope those activities will translate into community activism.

Giese said CEAC will continue on, working to make a positive impact in Cochrane and presenting environmentalism and change in a positive light.

“We don’t want to sit there and spew and present these doom and gloom scenarios,” he said.

CEAC’s members drive to make a difference all comes down to something that was decided on when the group was created, making changes happen through action.

“We didn’t want to be a group that sat around and twiddled our thumbs,” Giese explained.

“The word action in CEAC has been sort of a pillar that we’ve built everything around.”

CEAC will be hosting a strategy session Nov. 28, in the basement of the Family and Community Support Services HomeStead building, from 9 a.m to 3:00 p.m.

Giese hopes community members will turn out to tell CEAC what issues they want tackled, what changes they want to see, or to find out how they can get involved.

“What do people think CEAC should tackle in the next two years, the next five years, the next ten years,” Giese said. “I’m hoping that people will say ‘holy smokes I didn’t know CEAC did all those things.’”

Those interested in attending should contact Tim Giese at info@cochrane-environment.org, or 403-851-0562, or visit www.cochrane-environment.org for more information on the CEAC