

*North Vancouver
Outdoor School*

... ..RE-IMAGINED

*A PERSPECTIVE FROM THE HOST COMMUNITY -
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES*

.....SQUAMISH, B.C.

**MURRAY & ASSOCIATES
JUNE 2007**

THE SQUAMISH CONVERSATIONS - INTRODUCTION

The North Vancouver Outdoor School is on a journey of renewal. Since 1969, this environmental facility has contributed to generations of learners. Currently, NVOS is undertaking a series of actions that will lead to a comprehensive review and rejuvenation of the school and what it means to be sustainable into an exciting future.

During all of these years, the host community, Squamish, B.C. has had little direct influence on the Outdoor School. Certainly, NVOS is a known location and many from Squamish have attended as students or participated in the interesting annual open house. The community of Squamish has been invited for the first time, to contribute ideas for the revitalization of the Outdoor School.

This contribution has been in the form of public focused conversations plus many smaller meetings with interested groups and persons in Squamish – all eager to see NVOS become an active player in the new Squamish that is emerging as Squamish, itself, goes through a process of economic and social change from an economy based on forestry industries.

Today, Squamish is changing into a dynamic location with an economy based on multiple dimensions – education, outdoor recreation, tourism, and information technology. Squamish is rapidly becoming the economic market centre for the Sea to Sky Corridor, serving Whistler and Vancouver. Squamish is poised for a population surge that will double the current 15,000-person population by 2020.

Neighbouring communities have noted the energy in Squamish. In particular, North Vancouver School District 44 has reached out to Squamish to seek ideas about the Outdoor School through a series of meetings with many segments of the local community; particularly the communities associated with the environment, learning and tourism. This report defines the ideas and challenges, which have been identified in Squamish during these conversations.

Larry Murray
June 2007

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Report Outcomes:

1. To identify the interest and consideration from key groups in Squamish for ideas and opportunities for the renewal and reinvigoration of the Outdoor School.
2. To define this interest in a Recommended Opportunities Report to the North Vancouver School District 44.

THE CHALLENGE

The simple fact that the North Vancouver School District has chosen to renew the Outdoor School into an exciting future demonstrates that an understanding of the challenge is in place. The following ideas further define and defend the excellence in the decision that has already been made from a Squamish perspective.

Leaving the outdoor school business would be an option but fortunately the School District recognizes the impact that environmental education has on learners and the fundamental goodness such learning brings to society. Not only does the recent *Campus 2020* report support centres of excellence in learning innovation but also includes the Aboriginal community. *Campus 2020* speaks of identifying strategies to work with the business community to develop learning and internship programs. Support for basic and applied research is defined in the document. ‘*We must ensure BC has institutions recognized as global leaders in knowledge, discover, creation and application.*’ (Executive Summary – *Campus 2020*)

The Outdoor School is in the environmental business at the right time and in the right place.

“The environment will provide one of the largest opportunities for technological and managerial innovation – and profitable enterprise – that the industrial world has ever seen.” (P. Barnevik, CEO, ASEA Brown Boveri)

We are coming out of a ‘dark age’ in which society allowed the world to become environmentally damaged. Still today, there are major environmental issues with our air, water and land. Much of the new development in Vancouver and worldwide is built on polluted lands known as ‘brown fields’. In Squamish, Nexen Ltd. has cleaned up the oceanfront to the tune of \$45 million and other local industrial sites are still polluted and no one is seeking redress. We are still in the dark ages and the environmental learning that is ahead of us is the ‘large opportunity’ noted above. NVOS is poised to respond in an exciting way.

The challenge is that so much has to change. New strategic directions, new collaborations and alliances, new roles for management and planners, new approaches to learning, new research, and a new environmental ethic that pays attention where no attention was paid in the past. The North Van Outdoor School is already responding to this challenge. The reinvigoration of NVOS that is currently underway is an exciting extension of action for the right reasons.

What follows is an exploration of how Squamish can participate in this challenge!

THE SQUAMISH CONVERSATION STRATEGY

In the spring of 2007, the decision was made to seek the ideas and thoughts from a variety of communities and groups and individuals in Squamish through public conversations and many small group meetings. The process involved a number of outreach activities and opportunities to involve Squamish.

Larry Murray, Education Consultant- Murray & Associates, was engaged to facilitate the contacts in Squamish.

The Squamish perspective about NVOS started with the educational and environmental communities. Other groups also became involved as the implications of renewing the Outdoor School caught the attention of many in Squamish. The lack of knowledge in Squamish about the Outdoor School was soon recognized. Mostly everyone knew where it was located but many did not understand its operation or programs or capabilities.

THE KEY QUESTIONS:

- ***What is the Outdoor School currently doing that should be maintained into the future?***

This question encouraged Squamish to reflect on what they believed brought value to the Outdoor School. This question was explored at an entry or ‘feelings’ level and also at a deeper level of interpreting the significance of the ideas and notions suggested. Not only was the ‘what’ factor, explored but the ‘why’ allowed a further explanation of the ideas to confirm their contribution to the whole notion of what should be maintained.

- ***What is the Outdoor School currently doing that could benefit from further development and extension or modification?***

This question allowed Squamish respondents to elaborate and extend ideas that could enhance a program or activity already in place at the Outdoor School. Little filtering was done during the conversations. However, some probing questions were offered to help clarify any ideas suggested.

- ***What might the NV Outdoor School consider doing that it does not do now?***

The responses to this question were the most energetic. It encouraged ‘blue sky’ thinking and hopeful expectations for an exciting future based on nature, the environment and the human interaction that would enable deeper learning and appreciation. It is this question that helps everyone ‘re-imagine’ what a 21st Century and transformed NVOS might look like.

The Filters – The Reality Check

A study of this nature requires some decision parameters to curtail the urge to ‘blue sky’ ideas in an endless fashion. The report considers the conversations and recommendations along three conceptual lines:

1. *Is the idea Sustainable?*

The term ‘sustainability’ has taken on many forms and uses. For this report the term refers to the ability of an institution or organization to develop the tools to continually re-invent or re-imagine it. Too many organizations have experienced the zest of early development only to fall victim to middle and old age and soon fall into a crisis situation and a scramble to survive. The recommendations and observations in this report are meant to insert strategies and practices that will keep the organization close to the Tim Horton Ltd. slogan of being ‘*Always Fresh*’.

This means a relentless strategy of SMART Thinking – Specific goals, Measurable outcomes, Achievable strategies, Relevant actions, and Timely responses.

2. *Do the ideas offer a Triple Bottom Line – The Social, Environmental and Economic Agenda?*

The good old days of understanding that the bottom line was the financial one are passed. Society will only accept enterprises and projects that can demonstrate a social and environmental foundation as well - often referred to as the ‘People, Planet and Prosperity’ factors. The days of polluted lands and slum landlords hopefully are in the past as the new bottom lines emerge with energy and intent. NVOS is poised to offer such a perspective into its future role as a centre for environmental learning.

3. *The NVOS Mandate: ‘To develop each learner’s personal, social and academic potential’.*

This mandate from the Outdoor School speaks to the learning bottom lines. It is a comprehensive and inclusive mandate that has worked well and will continue to advantage NVOS into its next future. It speaks to the challenge of engaging learners where they are and through skilful programs, guiding them to where NVOS has set its high standards.

THE SQUAMISH CONTACTS

Announcements in the *Sea to Sky News* and *The Squamish Chief* newspapers and on the websites of the Chamber of Commerce and the Squamish Environmental Conservation Society and Squamish Arts Council plus direct contacts by email helped raise the level of interest in the Outdoor School. The following is a list of Squamish contacts:

- BC Centre of Tourism – Leadership and Innovation
- Britannia Mining Museum
- Camp Summit
- Capilano College
- Carney’s Waste Systems
- District of Squamish Council
- Evens Lake Camp
- Howe Sound Performing Arts Association
- Howe Sound School District 48
- Quest University
- Squamish Arts Council
- Squamish Brennan Park Recreation Centre
- Squamish Environmental Conservation Society
- Squamish First Nation
- Squamish Lillooet Regional District
- Squamish Sustainability Corporation
- Squamish Trails Society
- West Coast Railway Heritage Park

WHAT DID SQUAMISH SAY?

Key Questions one and two are combined in this section of the report:

- 1. What is the Outdoor School currently doing that should be maintained into the future?***
- 2. What is the Outdoor School currently doing that could benefit from further development and extension or modification?***

A. The Farm

All groups expressed an interest in the farm as a key element in the NVOS operation. The thinking was beyond the ‘petting farm’ concept and went deeply into understanding the links between human and nature at the agricultural / environmental level. We often over look the farm as the paramount collaboration between human and nature. From the first hunter gather cultures to the large tract industrial farming seen today, farms are the source of our nutrition and our own personal sustainability.

The learning and educational benefits of a working farm are regarded as a jewel in the outdoor school experience. This is where increasingly urban citizens can have a first-hand grasp of the food production experience. Children think milk comes from a carton and even many adults have never collected eggs directly from the hen’s nest. Society cannot continue to distance itself from the agricultural base. The growing evidence of organic or free-range products demonstrates the high value we still place on such products. Yet, growing rapidly into our lives are the genetically modified and artificial foods that seem to be driven by the profit motive instead of the social / health motive. Learning first-hand about food production and processing can only happen in a setting that values and celebrates the link between humans and nature in a sustainable and organic way. The NVOS Farm already demonstrates such a setting. Squamish says – *Don’t sell the farm!*

- ✓ The farm should be reconsidered as a working agricultural demonstration site and expand its operation to further enhance the basic food production and processing methods.
- ✓ Collaborations with such groups as ‘Investment Agriculture Foundation of British Columbia’ (www.lafbc.ca) offers programs such as ‘Bringing Agriculture to Students’ as well as other *environmental funding programs*.

B. The Fish Hatchery

The Squamish Groups also supported the Fish Hatchery as an important program in the educational offerings of the Outdoor School. Many of the same ideas were put forward related to fish and marine foods being a key to our sustainable health as were about the agricultural component. The west coast traditions of fishing are historic and need to be more thoroughly understood by learners of all ages. The excitement about a fish hatchery is that it is at the beginning of the story. The cooler at the grocery store is the usual first encounter humans have with fish. The Hatchery offers the full story from ‘fish egg to table’ possibility that the grocery store does not even consider offering.

Today, we encounter the discussions about fish farming and sustainable fishing practices. What does it all mean? Is it important that we even understand such issues? Education and learning institutions have responsibility and mandate to provide society with clear and accurate information so that informed decisions can be made. The Outdoor School is just such a setting for this to happen. The Tenderfoot Hatchery, a few kilometres away is an excellent resource for collaboration of this story at the industrial level.

- ✓ The fish hatchery as a key component of NVOS enables all visiting learners to come away with deeper understandings of the aquaculture aspect of the food chain and needs to be enhanced as a program component
- ✓ A relationship with the Tenderfoot Hatchery would create a fuller curriculum of learning
- ✓ The Department of Fisheries (DFO) and the UBC Centre for Aquaculture and Environmental Research (CAER) offer a possible collaboration for learning and hatchery research. (www.landfood.ubc.ca/research/centre.htm)
- ✓ The Squamish Nation fishing activities need be tied into the curriculum of NVOS in a new way to demonstrate early methods of fishing and help everyone understand the First Nation approach to fishing today.
- ✓ Continued collaborations with existing partners such as the Pacific Salmon Institute are valuable.

C. The Squamish Nation

The task of any environmental learning centre is to demonstrate the relationship that exists between the human and natural elements. In isolation, the relationship is challenging but as a sustainable and collaborative partnership, the human and natural components can be as successful as a Douglas fir tree living in the same environment as a black bear or eagle.

The Squamish Nation holds their commitment to the environment as a cornerstone of their culture. Their stated role as original stewards of the land and waters must continue to be a building block for the Outdoor School. Already, the Big House has shown the cultural programs can provide a range of interesting insights into Squamish culture.

- ✓ Developing a much closer working relationship with the Squamish Nation and the Elders to bring their culture and environmental stewardship to the Outdoor School programs has high value; not only for the environment but for the deeper understanding that British Columbia needs to have with our First Nation communities.
- ✓ Expanding the Squamish Nation program to focus on seasonal and festive occasions could involve greater use of the music, food and dance. This can become a four seasons presentation.
- ✓ The growth of First Nation cultural heritage suggests the need for conferences, pow-wows and meetings to further this agenda.. NVOS is well situated with a conference centre to create partnerships with Squamish Nation as host, to become a demonstration centre for cultural heritage. Research in this field is currently completing and key resources are at UBC (www.law.ualberta.ca/research/aboriginalculturalheritage.htm)
- ✓ The School Curriculum has many opportunities for greater inclusion of First Nation information and understandings. NVOS can expand this program in collaboration with the local Squamish Nation Education Office in Squamish.
- ✓ Workshops and mini-conferences with a Squamish Nation theme can become a regular part of the NVOS program.

D. Other Key Areas for Noted for Enhancement from the Squamish Conversations:

- **The Forest Lab:** The old growth forest provides the base for extensive ecology walks and wild life studies beyond the current offerings. The forestry industry is still a factor in Squamish and the connection with innovative uses of the forest as a source of learning and research would be a welcomed recognition of recent Squamish history.
- **Remediation and Conservation:** The role of clean water, air and soil has become a factor in our thinking about the future of our Earth. NVOS already has a handle on many aspects of water and soil stewardship and the Squamish focus is to develop these areas extensively as a learning tool and as a source of research for learners of all ages.
- **Learning Retreats:** NVOS has the facilities and the capability to further develop the retreat concept for a wide variety of environmental and ecological offerings. The Lower Mainland is a rich source of clients for staff and corporate retreat workshops and seminars that will enrich their operations through a close encounter of a natural kind.
- **Seasonal Activities:** Squamish is developing a rich social and cultural agenda in sports, the arts and recreation as well as in the fields of alternative health and wellness activities. Squamish is seeking locations for many of these activities on a seasonal basis. NVOS can be alert and responsive to collaborations with Squamish and the Sea to Sky Corridor to celebrate and recognize the changing seasons from an environmental perspective.
- **Local Marketing and Outreach:** Squamish has a number of communities that could use the NVOS facilities on a rental basis if they were available. The accommodation facilities were noted as well as the watercraft training for all ages.
- **Local School Use:** The client base from SD 48 could become a key user as closer contacts are made with local schools. Many local teachers participated in the focus conversations and confirmed the need for a first-hand environmental curriculum connection

WHAT SQUAMISH SAID ABOUT THE FUTURE:

Question 3 - *What might the NV Outdoor School consider doing that it does not do now?*

This key question enabled the participants in the focus conversations and in other meetings to explore a future view of NVOS with little constraint. In interpreting these ‘blue sky’ responses for this report, the reality check filters - Sustainability, Triple Bottom Line and the current Outdoor School mandate are reference points.

1. SQUAMISH SAID: Centre of Excellence for Provincial Environmental Learning

The world is experiencing global climate changes. This event has resulted in more questions than answers. The media is having a field day with the ideas ranging from fear mongering to investigative journalism. Classrooms across the country are showing ‘An Inconvenient Truth’ often with little regard for constructive debate.

The Squamish Conversations have reinforced the need for valid and reliable sources of environmental information and learning. Teachers and educators, at all levels are on the front line of this discussion and they need to be armed with the best information available. Where do they have an opportunity for a concentrated exposure to such learning? The *Environmental Learning Centre* can become the source for teachers, province-wide to gain the insights, resources and instructional strategies they need to teach a balanced response to their needs across all disciplines in the curriculum.

The ELC can become the next natural extension in the evolution of teacher education. The early ‘Normal Schools’ gave way to Teachers’ Colleges that evolved into Faculties of Education in universities. It is only natural that the model of teacher training will continue to evolve. The ELC is comfortably positioned to become the lead institution for Provincial environmental education for teachers across British Columbia.

- a. Create a protocol for Teacher Education between UBC and the Environmental Learning Centre.
- b. Invite all BC School Districts to send teachers for certified upgrades throughout the year. (Learning Weeks at ECL)
- c. Foster a Provincial wide Environmental Student Learning Centre.

2. ***SQUAMISH SAID: The Squamish Valley – A Story of Geological Proportions***

The Outdoor School is located in a spectacular geological theatre. This full story is yet to be told in all its forms. The coastal mountain formation, the volcanic history, the ice age, the creation of the Sea to Sky Valley are features readily seen but not well observed or understood by even those who have lived here all their lives. Add on the stories of the formation of the Chief and the river flow patterns and one realizes this is a world-class story – still mostly untold.

There is a 93 million year story with NVOS in the middle of this ancient shaping. This story of ‘fire and ice’ is rare but when it all happens within this corridor, it takes on very special significance. Few other locations in North America offer such a geological story all together in one place and with easy access for study and experience. Add the story of the salmon, eagles and bear to the story line and it becomes extraordinary. Then, mix in the story of the Squamish Nation and the story takes on the first of the exciting human components and the story becomes intriguing. The adventures of Captain Vancouver, the Caribou Gold Rush and the story of the first pioneers add the final and current chapters to a location that has been in the shadow Whistler and Vancouver.

The view from Squamish is that there is a dynamic story with drama, mystery and excitement that needs to be told. The Environmental Learning Centre (ELC) has an opportunity to become the ‘environmental story teller’ of the Sea to Sky Corridor. NVOS already has many programs in place to begin to tell this story. As the renewed focus comes into view, this environmental based story can set NVOS apart from all other similar locations simply by the impact of the world-class narrative that needs to be told.

What does this mean for the new Environmental Learning Centre?

- The story line enables the ELC to have a Sea To Sky Corridor influence and recognition.
- The region is an endless source of research possibilities.
- The new Environmental Learning Centre can become the model for a *regional demonstration research centre*
- The visitor attraction factor can contribute directly as a revenue source as on the key Squamish attractions.

3. ***SQUAMISH SAID:* Collaborations and Partnerships**

For the last 37 years, NVOS has been mostly a stand-alone enterprise. It has promoted a sense of being aloof and out of the mind's eye from the host community and beyond. The urgency and vibrancy with which society has adopted the environment as the next major area for world attention, demonstrates that NVOS programs are on everyone's radar.

Yet, the day of operating independently is gone. Don Tapscott writes in Wikinomics (2006) that 'No Company today, no matter how large or how global can innovate fast enough or big enough by itself...' He makes a strong argument for mass collaboration in which companies essentially open their books and secrets and make them enablers for things to happen in a collaborative way. NVOS operates at the pointy end of environmental learning. The future must include a variety of partnerships and collaborations and tight – loose protocols with many others. Squamish is demonstrating such a direction and NVOS will benefit from the synergy of local partnerships toward the same goals.

Three environmental learning partnerships seem to have merit at this point:

1. **The Squamish Environmental Conservations Society (SECS).** This loose network of local environmental organizations describes itself as a 'passionate, pro-active organization dedicated to wildlife and habitat protection ... in a balance between the needs of wildlife and human desire...' Estuary Bird Count, Winter Eagle Count, Salmon Festival, Songbird Festival and Greenways Development are activities and issues considered by SECS. The Trails Society and Squamish Streamkeepers extend this environmental network. Combining energy with NVOS across many levels would be an asset for both groups. This could range from co-sponsored events such as lectures or workshops to the combining of resources – human and physical for credit courses and research and development. It could include co-operation in seeking funding sources. There might be an opportunity for office space for SECS at the Environmental Learning Centre as part of the community outreach defined by NVSD 44.
2. **Capilano College.** Cap College has been a satellite campus in Squamish for over 10 years. It is now poised to have a much larger presence in Squamish, including the BC Centre for Tourism: Leadership and Innovation. The BCTLI program is already underway in a partnership with the Adventure Centre in Squamish. Many of the curriculum courses and programs offered by Capilano are environmentally and outdoor based. The foundation for both NVOS and Capilano College to explore opportunities for deeper collaborations can only be imagined. During the Squamish Conversations, both institutions have indicated a definite interest in exploring mutual interests.

3. **Quest University.** Quest is Canada’s newest university and it is here – in Squamish! The excitement and energy in this newly created learning institution is easy to see. Their entire focus is devoted to the ‘start up’ steps and they are unable to address partnership ideas at this time in the spring of 2007. However, it is very important to keep this idea alive and active as Quest settles into operation. Of particular advantage is the operation of the Quest curriculum. It will be delivered in very small classes and will be extremely first hand in its application. NVOS is already a hub of environmental learning and could well become the focus for many of Quest’s active programs in the future.

4. **SQUAMISH SAID: The Corporate or Business Partnerships**

“It is the foremost task and responsibility of our generation to re-imagine our enterprises and institutions, public and private.”
Tom Peters (Re-Imagine, 2003)

The case for a School District to increase capacity in private business is yet to be made. This perhaps for another study. Yet, in spite of the current funding mechanisms, School Districts and School Boards across the country are engaged in some private side operations. This ranges from rental of school space to some ESL programs and night school and summer schools. Every school principal is sensitive to the thousands of dollars made each year from in-school fund raising sales or Parent Council fundraisers and lottery grants. In what ways does the NVOS have the capability to expand its business plan deeper into the private sector?

Squamish is a little town re-inventing itself. It has new energy and new capabilities. Squamish is taking on its big cousins – Vancouver and Whistler and becoming a transformed community much less based on the forestry economy. NVOS is also on the brink of transformation but wisely continues to be environmentally based. In what ways can Squamish and NVOS consider collaborations?

Squamish has established a new economic corporation know as the *Squamish Sustainability Corporation*. This is the ‘re-imagined’ economic development office that most communities have in place. The SSC administers business development and tourism expansion. NVOS can build capacity in both domains by becoming business like in its operation as it has proven in the education side while opening the door to more of the eco-tourism opportunities. The SSC is very interested in assisting NVOS to explore these areas in conjunction with such developments in Squamish.

- Business marketing and promotion with the Squamish Sustainability Corporation (SSC)
- Attract the day tourist for environmental mini-courses.
- Collaborate with other Squamish environmental businesses such as Carneys Waste Systems

5. **SQUAMISH SAID: Adult Learners**

“It’s coming. We’ll have a society with a brand new type of old person – one more engaged in the world including the workplace”
(Allen Gregg, Canadian Business, May 2007)

The demographics are clear that the current generation of adults is nearing or close to retirement. This means a new consideration of a very large group of highly motivated people with time on their hands and money in their pockets. The growth of worldwide eco-tourism and learning vacations and volunteer holidays has become a whole new industry. The Sea to Sky Corridor already draws thousands each day for outdoor recreation and Whistler sports experiences. Yet, the number of older adults with less active lives outnumbers those who ski and hike. These adults have other more passive or interest based pursuits. Bird watching is the fastest growing hobby for many and Squamish is on a major bird flyway with keen birders in the community.

The nature travel business is well know in countries such as Kenya and Costa Rica and slowly becoming a factor in Canada. NVOS already has the core programs in place and attracting the adult learner is only a bird book away! The life-long learning concept can take on a reality at ELC.

The next stage of business development is based on the concept of ‘co-created experiences’ and ranks as the number one model for the next generation in the market place. Essentially, this means the service provider and the customer create the final product in a co-operative way. Choices, options, differentiated products all contribute to this trend. The ELC could move quickly up the ranks of environmental learning facilities by catering to this next step in customer service.

- Engage seniors to share and demonstrate their skills from their earlier generation when people gardened, preserved, cooked and cleaned without Vim or Saniflush!
- Squamish Brennan Park Recreation hosts many adult programs and is interested in new learning opportunities.
- Enable professional seniors to lead research studies on the environment and employ seniors in the work of the Centre as models of commitment and work ethic

6. ***SQUAMISH SAID:*** **Marketing and Promotion**

Squamish confirmed that in spite of being host community, there was a definite disconnect with the school and most people had only a vague idea about the activities there. NVOS is a ‘one-of-a-kind’ facility in this region and deserves so much better exposure to those who can use its resources. Recently, Squamish went through a major signage program. Attractive forest green direction signs define everything one can imagine – except the North Vancouver Outdoor School. At the same time, locals who know where it is and the resources it has are less able to ‘drop in’ and use the trails or wander about or investigate the opportunities there. Operating as a school, NVOS has had to set out visitor regulations that include pre-registration for visits and use. Such hurdles hinder more open use but serve the important purpose of security and supervision.

As NVOS evolves into its new form, a more open face will be an important feature. An inviting and welcoming front door can attend to both the registered visitor and the casual drop-in guest. Further marketing and promotion can reach out to new levels of client and audience as never before.

- Local signage in co-operation with the District of Squamish should be an immediate step that will define the location.
- Monthly bulletin board style notices in the media telling about coming events or programs
- Public workshops during key seasonal environmental events – salmon, eagles, spring plant, fall harvest, etc.
- Regular media press releases noting key events and co-marketing with Squamish Environmental interests.
- An interactive website site will engage environmentalists in on-going dialogues related to research, data sharing and issues locally and regionally.
- A provincial/national marketing program for key programs and events.

7. ***SQUAMISH SAID:*** **Pilot Projects and Innovative Programs**

In this rapidly changing world, the need to keep programs fresh has become the key to being sustainable. Enterprises that do not have a built in basis for innovative or pilot programs end up doing the ‘same old, same old’ until they become non-sustainable. Enterprises that are always tinkering and testing out new ideas while sticking to the knitting of the core programs tend to be more energized and successful. NVOS has the opportunity in its next phase to increase the testing out of new ideas and having exciting things cooking on the back burner.

The Squamish Conversations offered many ideas that could form the base for experimentation and innovation. Research and Development funding can support these initiatives that can become an integral part of the normal operation. The notion of incubator projects in the environmental fields is very exciting, particularly when one harnesses learning and people into a creative mix of opportunity. NVOS has demonstrated such an approach with the many partners and programs already has in place. This recommendation supports a continuation of this tradition on a more robust level.

- Squamish Nation Culture - Food Preparation and Cooking
- Environmental Leadership Programs for Teens
- Classroom Strategies and programs for Gifted Kids
- Wellness and Squamish Nation Healing
- Environmental Learning for Teachers who Teach Other Subjects
- Bears, Eagles and Salmon – The Relationship Seminars
- Environmental Music and Art
- The Urban Family in the Out-of-Doors
- Environmental Writers Guild
- International Environmental Conference
- Squamish Recreation Department Outdoor Environmental Learning
- Provincial Park Campers Interpretive Program At Alice Lake – next day at NVOS
- Youth programs – the Campfire Factor
- Hollyhock wellness style opportunities
- 100 mile diet menu
- Continually seek the ‘WOW’ factor

8. *SQUAMISH SAID: Environmental Leadership*

In a world where leaders often find they are less well informed than the people they lead, the issue of who is in charge and why, often clouds the real issues that have to be solved through effective leadership. Former mayor of Toronto, John Sewell, ([Going for Green](#), 2006) says this is a new paradigm that political leaders do not take into account. Are media driven or political ambitions the forces needed to create the changes needed? Environmental leadership will be a major asset as the future unfolds. Engaging the public to learn and understand and take action will be a key role for future leaders.

Effective Leadership rests in framing issues and helping find the common ground. It means bringing creative and innovation solutions forward and being able to work comfortably in a democratic arena. NVOS offers an effective platform for the development of environmental leaders. The authentic setting and challenging programs enable all learners to engage in leadership opportunities. The Outdoor School programs involve observing and listening, dialogue and conversations, gathering information, presenting and defending ideas, and taking action based on correct data. The Scientific method and leadership have much in common.

The next generation of environmental leader will do well to be educated at NVOS now and in its renewed form.

- Leadership strategies dominate and are woven into all activities and experiences for learners
- Create the environmental leadership trail-blazer ethic at NVOS
- Effective leadership models are available as reference points – guest presenters, researchers, on-site leaders
- Squamish has many environmental leaders across many domains. They can be available!
- Raise awareness of the environment through the media and have students contribute articles.
- Create occasions for work groups or research teams to tackle a topic and report their results.
- Celebrate success in teamwork and collaboration in more effective ways
- Engage the David Suzuki's of the world and Velcro them to the new NVOS!

And in Conclusion....

Thomas Friedman, (The World is Flat, 2005) states that no one single word accounts for more than 1 or 2 percent of all Goggle searches. The world has gone crazy with the search for information and this is another indicator of the flattening of the world and the rise in value of empirical data. Friedman's final chapter is entitled 'Imagination'. In it, he states that it is never *more* important than now to seek the one commodity that continues to elude Goggle and Yahoo and MSN – that is imagination.

Tom Peters, (Re-Imagine, 2003) offers 343 pages of challenge for society at all levels to understand that we have entered an entirely new age but we are still operating at too many levels as if in some earlier era. His challenge is to enable everyone to re-imagine our world and society by breaking out of the patterns and mindsets that hinder the real progress that has to happen. His final chapter helps us re-imagine the kind and quality of new leadership needed – the first quality is that 'leaders create opportunities.'(P.320)

The recent conversations with Squamish have been a valuable source of information from a small community working hard at 're-imagining' itself. In a similar way to NVOS, Squamish is finding the leadership and imagination to build a sustainable future. The North Vancouver School District has the wonderful opportunity to champion a whole new way to deliver environmental education in British Columbia through a re-imagined Outdoor School.

Don Vanthournout, (Return on Learning, 2006) recalls a young lady who was leading a learning transformation team at Accentur who noted, 'Whatever else we do, the learning programs we create have to be phenomenal.' (P.80).

So, too, the learning programs at the new outdoor learning facility will have to be phenomenal!

The last word from David Suzuki –

"We are seeing once again how connected we are to the natural world and how much we depend on it for our quality of life."
(Vancouver Sun Editorial – The Environment Edition, May 5, 2007)

Larry Murray, June 2007

Key Recommendation Opportunities:

The following recommendations and opportunities follow from the focus conversations with many groups in the host community, Squamish. Each recommendation has been addressed in earlier segments of this report.

It is recommended that The Outdoor School / Environmental Learning Centre:

1. ***Maintains and enhances the current core values, goals, objectives and outcomes into the next phase of its existence.*** The test of time has demonstrated the strength in these core values. These values are needed more than ever as society becomes more urban based and alert to global environmental issues. School students will continue to benefit from the ELC.
2. ***Takes full advantage of the interest and energy in the host community, Squamish, to continue to invigorate the Centre.*** Achieving and maintaining a local perspective will be a strong attractor to those who sense the uniqueness in the Sea to Sky Corridor. This also means using the extensive environmental expertise and knowledge found in Squamish.
3. ***Creates a strong local, regional and provincial environmental presence.*** The high value that society places on environmental learning at this time, places this outdoor school in the centre of this energy. A strong voice is needed across the Province if BC is to remain in the forefront of environmental learning. NVOS / ECL can become the signature provincial environmental centre and attract worldwide interest and funding support along the way.
4. ***Becomes the Provincial Trainer for all levels of environmental education for educators.*** Teachers must receive their environmental knowledge and skill development from an authoritative and authentic source. The Centre can become the Provincial centre of excellence for environmental teacher training. Intensive learning workshops and seminars can build the environmental learning for all BC Teachers in collaboration with a certifying institutional body such as UBC.
5. ***Enables Squamish Nation to become a major contributor to the environmental story and reconnect with the environment.*** The First Nation defines themselves as stewards of the land but may be challenged in this role as modernization continues. The ELC becomes the source for First Nations to regain the knowledge, skills and values of what stewardship means across the ages. In doing so, the Centre attracts First Nation learners and Elders from across the country.

6. ***Continues developing working collaborations with local, regional and provincial partners.*** Current partnerships with the Nature Conservancy, Pacific Salmon, Pacific Foundation, are concrete demonstrations of how NVOS has created valuable partnerships. A focus on collaborations with Colleges, Universities and other organizations whose goals harmonize with ELC can be explored. Smart Growth (www.smartgrowth.bc.ca) offers much to the new ECL.
7. ***Builds an active marketing and promotion strategy.*** The learning opportunities at the Environmental Learning Centre will have high market appeal to everyone seeking an experience with nature. An effective marketing strategy can motivate the core users and interest new customers. Marketing can help achieve the financial sustainability required. ELC has exciting activities and programs - this message needs to be heard often and widely.
8. ***Adds key staff to fill roles that will enable the Centre to build capacity.*** The current staff is an excellent example of a dedicated team working effectively to deliver the environmental programs. New levels of staffing must be considered to create the new momentum forward. Staff in the sciences / research and education as well as in management, marketing and grounds will help build capacity. New part time and permanent positions will offer the stability needed
9. ***Uses the storyline of the Sea to Sky Corridor as a foundation in the program.*** There is a growing pride and understanding in Squamish of the environmental magnificence of the Sea to Sky Corridor. It is an epic environmental story that has not been told. Weaving this story line into the NVOS programs will be a value added feature that will dazzle even the most jaded environmentalist. The attraction value of being in the middle of millions of years of readily accessible geological and environmental locations will be a learning motivator like none other.
10. ***Explores unique and alternative ways to finance and bring value to the organization.*** The usual channels for funding will continue to be valuable additions to the bottom line and the new financial relationships that can be created have already demonstrated energy. The measure of a company by the finances alone is suspect. Money is easy to obtain. Intellectual capital is a much more valuable commodity but so intangible. Decimal accuracy needs to be supplemented with new forms of measuring value. For example, an organization is only as good as its....people? innovations? learning curve? teambuilding? turnover? bottom line? etc. This will be an exciting challenge for this renewal.