

SOLUTIONS

WHEN INSPIRATION MEETS ACTION



58
WAYS TO
LIGHTER & HAPPIER LIVING



Welcome

For every problem there is a solution. That is why, instead of focusing on the bad news that seems to be everywhere, we have taken a positive approach to showcase what is possible.

Welcome to the premiere edition of Solutions where you can quickly and easily find solutions for a wide variety of topics relevant to living life — at home, work and school — more fully and sustainably.

Since 2012, the Creatively United for the Planet Society has been bringing people together to explore ways we can live happier, healthier and more resilient lives. More than 10,000 people have attended our zero waste events to meet, learn and share with each other and hundreds of British Columbia innovators, community hereworkers and changemakers.



Photo by Doreen Webb

Discovering revolutionary hemp/lime construction blocks. See solutions 37+38 for more info.

Our registered non-profit community keeps those conversations going year-round online at www.creativelyunited.org where there is free access to all. We're sharing some of that wisdom in this handy guide because we believe that, together, anything is possible and that the actions of one individual can, and does, make a difference, regardless of one's age.

Interested in showcasing what your community is doing and starting your own chapter? Let us know. We're keen to help.

After all, we can all learn a lot from Bhutan, considered the happiest country in the world, where their success is measured on a Gross National Happiness index vs Gross Domestic Product (GDP). They understand the direct correlation between the health of the environment and the health of their citizens.

Consider taking on one solution a week with the understanding that there are more solutions than problems — solutions that can contribute to your health and happiness, while saving you money, energy and resources.

Happy Reading,

Frances Litman, Communications Coordinator and Founder
on behalf of the Creatively United for the Planet Society

All photos by Frances Litman, unless otherwise credited

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58 WAYS TO

LIGHTER & HAPPIER LIVING



1 Attitude of Gratitude

Having a bad day? Consider this: Your worst day may be someone else's best day. Putting things into perspective, finding joy and giving thanks for the simplest of things can change everything. Many people report that keeping a journal of what they are grateful for keeps them feeling less anxious, more grounded, and happy.

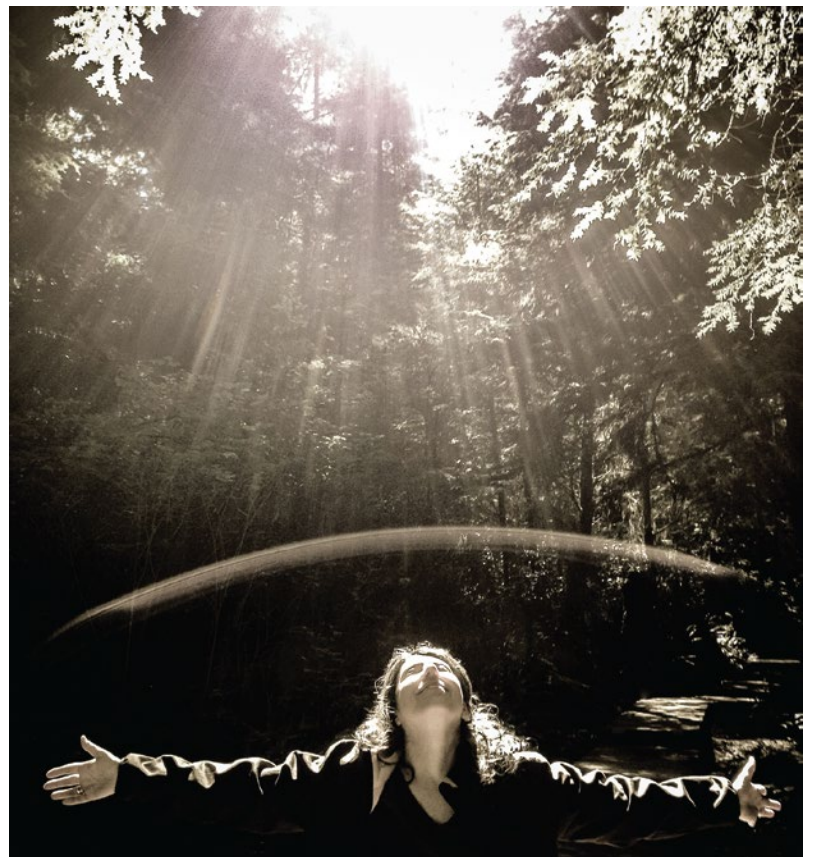
Get Outside & Breathe 2

Motion removes emotion. So does breathing. When we get stressed we tend to hold our breath, so take in and let out a big belly breath, and another and another.

Swing your arms, move your feet, and, regardless of the weather, get outside for as long as possible each day.

Our sensory system evolved in the natural world, so when we're outside, our frontal lobe, the part of our brain that's hyper-engaged in modern life, deactivates and becomes relaxed when we look, hear, and smell what we were naturally predisposed to experience.

Public health officials in Finland recommend that people get into the forest a minimum of five hours a month to stave off depression, lower stress and enhance mental well-being. The Japanese refer to this type of therapy as "forest bathing." The cleansing properties to our system are well documented to be worth a daily dive.

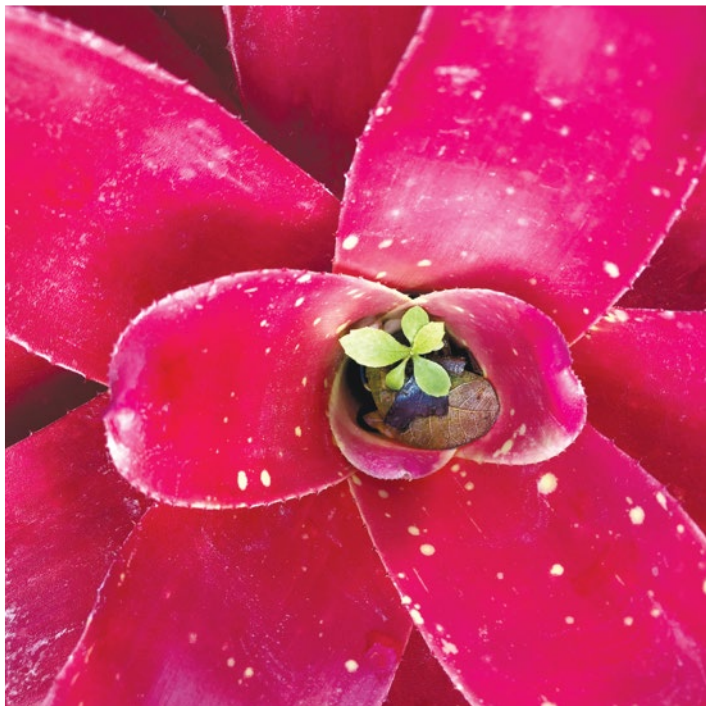


Fall in Love with Nature's Beauty

Get out for a walk in the woods. Stroll down to the beach. Take in a sunset or stay up to catch the striking occurrence of a shooting star.

There are many opportunities to fall in love with nature's beauty, it doesn't have to be a complicated love story. The best of nature's teachings are that the simple things in life are worth watching out for. Did you happen to notice that tree you just walked by? Did you hear birds chirping? Or, have you stopped to enjoy the simple beauty of clouds against a blue sky?

Believing in the power of the natural world and noticing its charm aligns us with what's important in life. That's why nature's beauty is a love story worth falling for.



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4 Just Laugh

Laughter has long been regarded as one of the best medicines. Did you know that your body does not know the difference between fake laughter and a true, hearty belly laugh? The process of laughing releases endorphins into your system that makes you feel good, naturally. In addition to lifting your mood and brightening your day, 10-15 minutes of sustained laughter can also burn 10-40 calories.

Laughter Yoga is a modern exercise movement where practitioners get together to engage in spontaneous laughter. They believe in the benefits that laughter can bring to one's body and mind. Clubs exist worldwide with many free to attend. The connection to yoga is only through breathing exercises, so anyone, of any age, can do it.

Imagine how much lighter, brighter, and happier our world would be if more people laughed. After all, it's hard to be mad when you're laughing. Go ahead, just laugh!

5 Restore a Climate Friendly World

We have a great opportunity to shift our world into one that is lighter on our environment. Climate justice is a term that has been shared widely on this topic. It refers to our climate state being a political and ethical matter (not just an environmental one). We understand through this that how we treat our planet is a moral and personal issue.

Pause for a moment to check-in with your values. Do you treat the environment with the same care as you would treat a good friend? Do you think about how your actions are affecting the earth? Have you considered that what we do on our planet today will be inherited by our children tomorrow?

When creating a climate friendly world, we must make friends with our planet first. By creating changes in our own lives we encourage climate restoration, but we also must think bigger. We must take the conversation into our homes to discuss with our families and bring them forward to our governments.



Plan with Youth in Mind 6

Investing in youth and planning with their welfare in mind is of benefit to everyone. The passion and energy that youth harness to change the world is unequalled. This is why, when we give youth the tools they need to be successful and empowered leaders, we secure a healthier tomorrow.

Here are a few of the ways we can support youth:

- Create educational programs that promote peace, good governance, sustainable lifestyles, reconciliation, environmental conservation, and ambassadorship
- Create self-sustaining affordable housing and green neighbourhoods
- Offer affordable, accessible, and reliable electric transit and ride sharing services
- Address climate change now
- Invest in sustainable green energy and building solutions
- Retrofit buildings with low carbon, green energy alternatives
- Institute policies for environmental protection
- Protect mature urban trees and old growth forests
- Start planting more food trees and forests and ensure their survival through proper care and maintenance
- Designate more green space and parkland
- Create accessible, affordable education for all
- Fund health and dental care services
- Promote mental health awareness and healthy, active living
- Encourage more time in nature
- Foster partnerships between youth and their community
- Celebrate diversity
- Promote gender neutrality
- Lower the voting age to 16
- Provide more rewarding employment opportunities
- Encourage entrepreneurship through a circular, renewable economy
- Create more opportunities for youth to lead their own forums and events
- Listen more and be open to exploring new possibilities

7 Celebrate Climate Champions

As we transition to a world where we encourage lighter living, celebrating those who are championing this process is important. A champion doesn't need to be someone famous.

Is there someone in your network who you see making a difference for the environment? Why not tell them so and that you are proud of their efforts and join them in lobbying for stricter climate policies and action?



8 Adopt a One Planet Approach



Graphic courtesy of Bioregional.com/one-planet-living

North Americans are consuming and living as though we have the resources of five planets*. Since we only have this one planet — to meet our needs and those of future generations — we must do more to reduce our consumption and its resources.

We are at a point in our history where we must consider every aspect of our daily lives and adjust our consumption to live within our planet's capacity.

As we set economic, social, and environmental goals, a one planet approach means that we commit to practices that are within the planet's boundaries of sustainability. However, we must first understand that our self interests must be aligned with the health of the community and humanity as a whole, and the economy must be grounded in nature's principles. We can then engage with our local, provincial, and federal governments to set feasible targets to achieve our goals.

With concerns for our climate growing, we are seeing a greater number of community groups forming to accelerate the change that needs to happen.

Bioregional is a global organization that has created the One Planet Living® sustainability framework that has been adopted by a growing number of Saanich-based organizations in Victoria, BC. The Creatively United for the Planet Society is one of more than a dozen integrators.

The above graphic illustrates the key areas of the framework. By uniting the wisdom of businesses, individuals, indigenous knowledge, and government policy, we can create an alliance that respects the capacity of the planet we live on.

*Source: Footprintnetwork.org, Overshootday.org.



Are you wanting to achieve energy efficiency and sustainability on your next home purchase?

Some things to consider:

- Water Conservation
- Energy Efficiency
- Indoor Air Quality
- Energy Audits
- Eco-friendly Lighting & Appliances
- Passive Solar
- Non-toxic Building Materials
- Electric Vehicles and Charging
- Hydro and Government Grant Programs
- Eco-friendly landscaping & more!

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Protect Farmland & Create Urban Farm Landscapes

The interest in locally grown, nutritiously rich, organic food is growing significantly. However, farms, food trees, and land is rapidly disappearing and many people do not have access to local and cultural food or adequate healthy food and must rely on emergency food services.

"Less than 50% of people on the island consume their daily recommended fruit and vegetables (Canada Food Guide), over 50% of people are overweight or obese, and the prevalence of diet related disease and chronic illness (diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease) continues to rise."

Source: Good Food Network Report 2025

As we make a stand for local food security, we must learn how we, as individuals and communities, can protect the future of agricultural land.

Here's a few ways you can protect farmland:

- 1) Buy from local farmers.
- 2) Resist shopping at big box stores (forests and farmland often are paved over for these stores).
- 3) Support government policy that invests in farmers.
- 4) Encourage and support younger generations interested in farming.
- 5) Review the Good Food Network Report 2025 guide available on www.goodfoodnetwork.info and the CreativelyUnited.org Resources page. It's an example of a solutions-based framework that leverages significant health, environmental, and economic benefits through food system initiatives that increase food security. It also addresses access to safe, healthy, and culturally appropriate food that honours traditional ways of hunting, gathering and fishing by indigenous peoples.

FARM TO TABLE

Fresh. Local. Sustainable.



Working with the community and using local ingredients is a part of our underlying philosophy. Showcasing food grown close to home is what we love. Our community partners and staff are dedicated to sourcing the best of Vancouver Island and we put the best into everything we do.

Our inventive daily fresh sheets feature dishes just one step removed from the freshness of the farmers' fields.

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Find Your Food at Farmers Markets

Abundance surrounds us, but we can miss it if we don't step outside of our regular routine. Did you know that local farmers markets offer a bounty of wholesome, fresh, nutritious local food and drink? They also have great live music, local art and crafts, and operate weekly in many neighbourhoods year round.

Farmers markets create stronger community connections and a thriving local economy. They also support the preservation of farmland which is important for regional food security. When we get to know our food producers and artisans, we understand who our purchases support. Doesn't it feel good when you see the smile of the person who grew your food or made your goods?

Have a conversation with someone new. Try food you may have never seen before. Ask a farmer some questions. Get to understand how locally grown doesn't just guarantee freshness, it also ensures less waste and a flourishing local commerce.

11 Fuel Up With Good Nutrition Eat Seasonally and Regionally



When non-organic produce is bought out of season, it has generally been grown with pesticides and fertilizers, is picked before it reaches its optimum ripeness and nutrition, and shipped from far away.

Because we want to be able to eat everything at all times of the year, we are no longer eating seasonally, regionally or nutritiously.

Eating local foods in season may limit the selection of food we consume, however, it increases our potential for good health. Given food is fuel for our bodies, choose what you eat wisely.

Also, when we purchase food that is grown close to home, we invest in fresher, more nutritious food with a reduced carbon footprint that also supports our local economy, people and farmland.

Learn from British Columbian food experts, leading small businesses and Vancouver Island non-profits about all things food - from growing lemons and exotic fruits, to veganism and food security.

Visit: [YouTube.com/creativelyunited](https://www.youtube.com/creativelyunited)



Grow With Community and Boulevard Gardens

Not everyone has space for a garden at home. However, sometimes boulevards provide enough space for innovative pocket gardens and, lucky for us, there are wonderful green spaces cropping up all over cities that are being shared as community gardens.

Often plots at these gardens are manageable in size and perfect for new and experienced gardeners. If you appreciate the importance of growing your own food, then consider joining a community garden.

A few suggestions for new gardeners:

- 1) Start with a small plot. If you can manage it the first season, increase it the next!
- 2) Don't overplant; leave room for your veggies to produce and grow!
- 3) Make sure your soil is rich and full of organic matter when you begin.
- 4) Plant your favourite foods so your harvest will be enjoyed.
- 5) Be prepared to preserve your abundance by canning or freezing at harvest.
- 6) Remember you are a powerful part of creating local food security.









Cultivate Bee Loving Spaces 13

One of the most crucial creatures to the web of life is the humble bee. Sadly their numbers have dwindled over the years due to pesticides and climate change. These hardworking pollinators help trees, flowers, and plants survive and thrive, contributing daily to our food supply and economic resilience.



Here's a few ways to cultivate bee-loving spaces:

-  Do not use herbicides, insecticides or pesticides as they kill bees and other pollinators.
-  Leave room for bees. Some bees nest in the ground and require patches of bare earth, as well as dead plant stems for nesting.
-  Plant flowers! When luring bees, you want to plant groupings of flowers so that they can feed rapidly with shorter distances to travel between blooms.
-  Build a bee home. You can create a mason bee home or native bee home from scratch! There are many resources on the internet to help you get started. Try searching for Mason Bee homes.
-  Create a bee bath - a shallow plate with a few rocks in it and a little water will do.
-  Invest in native plants as there are certain bees that only harvest pollen from plants that are native to the region.

*Be bold. Be audacious. Just start somewhere.
Focus on progress, not perfection.*

Eat Responsibly

What we eat impacts our climate. The world's food system is responsible for about one quarter of the greenhouse gases that humans generate each year, according to ScienceMag.org.

This includes raising and harvesting all the plants, animals and animal products we eat — beef, chicken, fish, milk, lentils, kale, corn and more — as well as processing, packaging and shipping food to markets all over the world. If you eat food, you're part of this system.

The emissions involved in deforesting land for cattle, harvesting livestock feed, plus the methane from livestock itself, accounts for 23 per cent of global warming, 45 per cent of global freshwater consumption and 45 per cent of total land use.

The consumption of beef involves 160 per cent more land resources than people who eat a plant-based diet. Beef, lamb and cheese have the highest footprint. Shifting from beef to chicken and eating more plants, is one way to start. By eating vegan you can cut your carbon footprint in half.

One simple way to cut food-related emissions is to waste less. Buying what you need and actually eating it — instead of tossing it out — means that the energy used to produce your food has been spent efficiently.

Source: ScienceMag.org , One Green Planet, nytimes.com



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Focus on the Positive

Did you know that taking on an optimistic perspective can change a person's life? Being appreciative of the world around us enhances our immune system, brain function, and energy.

The concept of positive thinking was first popularized by Norman Vincent Peale, best-selling author of the book *The Power of Positive Thinking*. His quote: *Change your thoughts and you change your world*, remains popular to this day. Peale stressed the power of focusing on the positive things in life and making a practice of it.

Try it out for yourself. Pause for a moment and find something to appreciate. This could be one thing that worked well today. It could be a list of your blessings. It might be the regular things we take for granted, like clean clothes to put on and food to eat. Or maybe it's one thing you did today that you are proud of?

Harness the power of the Law of Attraction, which states that we attract that which we put our time and energy towards. In other words:

Focus on what you want instead of what you don't want!

There will always be things to criticize. However, when we shift our focus to positive thinking, everything becomes much easier.





16 Celebrate Vibrant Health

Health is wealth! Sometimes we get so busy earning a living, we forget to live. Without our health, it's hard to enjoy the rest!

When we begin to celebrate vibrant health we align with the things that truly matter — like taking care of ourselves, each other and our planet.

Here are a few suggestions to increase our vibrancy:

- Drink more water
- Get outside at least twice a day
- Breathe deeply
- Eat local, organic plant-based food
- Enjoy home cooked meals
- Be grateful for life
- Move your body
- Stretch, dance, do yoga
- Smile more
- Participate in community
- Meditate
- Avoid drugs and alcohol

Digital Detox - Take a Tech Break 17

Smart phones and other portable digital devices have become an addiction.

Taking a digital detox is just as important as any other self-care practice. The latest *Digital 2019* report states that on average, each Internet user spends 100 days a year of their time surfing the Internet. That's a lot of time that could be spent doing a multitude of other things.

A successful detox allows our body to return to a natural state of balance. Here's a few ways to unplug and have a digital detox in your day:

- Turn your device off and take a break from it.
- Keep your devices out of sight and at arms length.
- Eat your meals without a device nearby.
- Keep your devices out of the bedroom.
- Give yourself an allowance of screen time per day.
- Set a time before going to sleep to stop looking at your phone.
- Turn off distracting notifications.
- Only use one device at a time.
- Leave your device behind when going for a walk.



18 Volunteer with Local Hero Workers

Stepping outside of your comfort zone and routine keeps life interesting and your mind and body inspired. Being of service in your community is one way to challenge yourself to use your skills in a new way. There are many local non-profits that are in need of volunteers to support their positive missions. These organizations do so much to increase the quality of life in our cities and on our planet; it's time we do something for them.

Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist, Victor Frankl, a Holocaust survivor and author of the bestseller, *Man's Search for Meaning*, advocated that when we focus on doing meaningful acts we encounter a sense of purpose in our lives. So what would bring a sense of purpose to your life? How about lending a hand to local hero workers and organizations that align with your values?

Since many non-profits and charities rely on volunteers and donations, your gift of volunteering time and expertise can truly make a difference. CreativelyUnited.org showcases more than 170 non-profits in our Pair-Up directory. Check it out and see who you might want to volunteer with.



Lead by Example 19

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has. – Margaret Mead

One of the most persuasive things we can do is to use the power of example in the way we live, work and love. Humans model themselves after each other. Don't feel powerless to make a difference. We all have the ability to inspire others by our actions. Effective leaders don't just talk about change; they live it. So be the change you want to see and let others know what you are doing so they can get involved too.

Finding common goals is a great place to start. The ability to inspire, engage, create and collaborate can result in magic.

Inspire – Through positive action, lead by example and lift each other up.

Engage – Get out of your comfort zone. Connect with one another. Ask questions. Become a good listener.

Create – Creativity is a powerful tool and the foundation of all things. Creation plus ingenuity begins every great project.

Collaborate – We are social beings. To remain healthy and happy, joining forces with one another helps us live longer lives.



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Embrace a Zero Waste, Circular Economy

20 Nature wastes nothing. Living and working in sync with nature was part of the traditional way of life for the first people of this land for millennia.

Many people can share stories about their grandparent's appliances lasting forever. The past few decades have made built-in obsolescence an expected part of our contemporary throw away culture. Now, with climate change top of mind, there is a growing interest in products having a second life. A repair and share movement is growing.

This transformative, regenerative, circular economy takes advantage of the inherent design flaw of manufactured waste by creating new entrepreneurial opportunities for those interested in keeping materials and products recirculating. High profit concepts that benefit people and planet are evolving in this new economy where longevity and modular design is rewarded. Components that can be fixed or swapped out are being kept in use, reducing pressure on landfills and avoiding unnecessary pollution from manufacturing.

Innovative programs to avoid waste are springing into existence everywhere. Here are a few examples:

Tool Sharing **21**

Tool sharing is one way to get to know your neighbours. Given the number of times lawns are cut, hedges pruned or leaves are raked or blown, it makes sense for homeowners to share tools among neighbours to reduce consumption and costs.

Food Sharing **22**

Ensuring food is not wasted but shared is the mandate of two amazing BC organizations. Check out: [FoodMesh.ca](#) and [LifecyclesProject.ca](#)

Little Free Libraries **23**

What if you could go for a walk in your neighborhood and pick up a free book along the way? There is a movement that is making this possible. Little Free Libraries are on the rise. From inspiring readers to building connections and encouraging imagination, these libraries are a great way to bring books back into our homes.



Victoria, B.C. currently has the highest density of mapped Little Free Libraries with 250 unique libraries dotting the city. These libraries are filled with books, cd's, dvd's and more. Each is like unwrapping a package of treasures.

Show your love for free libraries by building or finding one near you. Take a book. Leave a book. Little Free Libraries are that simple.

Repurposed & Upcycled Home & Building Supplies **24**

Habitat for Humanity Victoria ReStores are a wonderful example of a circular economy in action. These home and building supply stores accept and resell quality new and used building materials, as well as furniture, appliances and home accessories. Shopping at ReStore is a socially conscious decision, as the money generated is used for Habitat Victoria's affordable homebuilding projects and operations. It's also an environmentally conscious decision, as much of what is sold is product that is new, gently used or customer returns that might otherwise end up in a landfill. All inventory is 100% donated.

Repair Cafés **25**

How many times have you wished you could get something repaired instead of tossing it away? Perhaps it's a tear in a garment, or a hole in a sock, a cord to a favourite appliance, or something mechanical. More than 1,653 non-profit Repair Café groups are active worldwide, helping to divert hundreds of thousands of kilograms of waste from landfills.

On average, Repair Cafés are generally held once a month in a community meeting place setting and even include mentorship on how to: sew, knit, darn, glue, solder, and make electrical repairs.

To find out when the next Repair Café near you is, visit Repair Café on Facebook or the [CreativelyUnited.org](#) event calendar and learn more about starting your own group at www.repaircafe.org/en

Challenge Yourself to Achieve Zero Waste

If you want to undertake one of the biggest challenges imaginable, try going without creating any waste for an entire year! That's exactly what one Vancouver area couple did. Their fascinating story was made into an engaging, multi-award winning comedic documentary known as *The Clean Bin Project*. Another highly recommended documentary is *The Story of Stuff*.



26 Bring Your Own Packaging

There's many ways to become creative about packaging to avoid filling landfills.

Pause before you leave home and prepare. Depending on where you are going, think about what you might take with you so that you don't end up creating unnecessary waste. All we need to do is think one step ahead to be the solution.

- Many restaurants and food trucks will let you take food away in your own containers (reusable glass or steel are good choices). If you are visiting family for dinner, bring your own containers for leftovers.
- There is a great alternative packaging on the market, which uses beeswax on cloth. It works similar to plastic wrap, but is reusable and completely compostable.
- Refuse plastic straws! Travel with and use a metal, paper, or bamboo straw if you need one.
- Always have reusable bags with you. Pop anything and everything into these, knowing that every plastic bag you avoid is one that won't be filling up your home or the landfill.
- When it comes to toiletries and bathroom supplies, try to source refillable options - like shampoo, conditioner, and lotions. Plastic and package free products are preferable. Get creative and have fun by making your own products at home.
- Shop locally at zero waste, bulk and refill stores.

Improving our quality of life means that we build awareness around our consumption and the power we wield with our dollar. Take a moment right now to think about where the things you buy come from? How far have they travelled to get to you? What kind of carbon footprint does that create? Might you be able to ship less by buying products that are made locally?

Shopping for local goods, produce and artisan products is not only kinder to the environment, it is also more generous to our local economy and community.

Shop Local, Ship Less 27

Do you know a farmer? Might you have a friend that is an artist? Is there a way to source what you desire directly from them?

A few ways to shop local and ship less, include shopping at farmers markets and locally owned stores, buying gifts at craft fairs and art shows, and choosing restaurants and cafes that serve locally sourced ingredients.

Seablind – The High Cost of Shipping Our Stuff

The shipping industry is one of the most polluting and, until now, unregulated industries in the world. Seventeen of the largest ships emit more toxic sulphur than all the cars in the world. As well, ships burn dirty fuel that emits black carbon which, in turn, accelerates ice melt. We need to consider what shipping does to our health, the Arctic, and the world.

Seablind, a powerful documentary by British Columbia filmmakers, explores these questions and the hidden costs of shipping — a massive facet of globalization that virtually all of us rely on yet few know anything about. CreativelyUnited.org proudly hosted the Canadian premiere of *Seablind*. See CreativelyUnited.org's *Artists as Changemakers* video series to watch an interview with Victoria, B.C., filmmaker, Sarah Robertson.

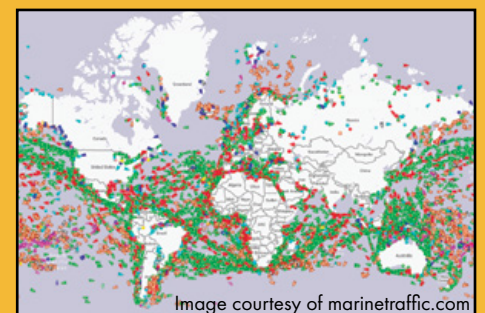


Image courtesy of marinetraffic.com

Waste Not! 28

Did you know that 58% of all food produced is never eaten due to visible blemishes or logistical production errors? Meanwhile, only 1 in 8 B.C. families are food secure, according to FoodMesh.

In response to a desire to solve the global problem of avoidable food waste and food insecurity, the Lower Mainland team at FoodMesh.ca has found a food rescue solution that has provided 2.5 million meals, rescued 2 million kilograms of food and saved 3.8 million in CO₂ emissions since their inception in 2015.

FoodMesh.ca provides apps and services for food businesses and charities to safely divert surplus food to the highest end use.

Another organization that is working to ensure food is not wasted but shared is LifecyclesProject.ca. They rescue and redistribute surplus farm produce; do fruit tree food picking, education and distribution; transform school yards into living garden classrooms; rebuild local food systems with their seed saving, swapping and seed library; create new models of park stewardship with food production at the core; and advocate for healthy local food systems and food for everyone.

29 Ditch using Disposable Coffee Cups

Coffee can be seen as an everyday necessity that gets most people through their day. Are we really aware of the enormous impact of buying our coffee in a disposable cup each day, or even once in a while? The solutions are easy! Bring your own travel cup and make a habit of always using it. Many coffee shops will give you a small discount on your order if given a re-usable container (anywhere from 5 to 30 percent). Ask the barista for a "to stay" mug. Your coffee will stay hot, fresh, and flavourful!

Fast Facts

- ☞ Vancouverites throw out 2.6 million paper coffee cups every week.
- ☞ Almost two billion take-out coffee cups needlessly end up in landfills each year because most Canadians have not switched to using travel cups.
- ☞ Most fast food/coffee cups are not recyclable or facilities don't exist to recycle cups or lids.
- ☞ EACH disposable coffee cup is responsible for 0.24 lbs of carbon (CO₂) greenhouse gas emissions.

Sources: City of Vancouver, CBC, The Vancouver Sun, environmentaldefence.ca



Change Our Habits

By restructuring our environment in ways that sustain good behaviours and making bad behaviours inconvenient, we can break free of the constraints that limit our freedom and impede optimum health.

Observing what drives our habits is the first place to start. Could it be that our daily coffee or snack stop is driven by a need for distraction or interaction?

Be aware that every day, marketing firms are creating cravings in the hope that we respond by opening our wallets. This is why we tend to overconsume in order to solve some "problem" in our lives.

Conscious effort and awareness will help us formulate strategies for reform. For example, controlling the cues that make us reach for the phone every time it pings is one way to control this habit. Try turning your phone off, for starters, and changing up your routine. You might be surprised how much lighter and happier you feel as a result.



Pick Fashion That Doesn't Cost the Earth

- The apparel industry is one of the highest contributors of pollution on our planet.
 - The fashion industry produces 10% of all humanity's carbon emissions, is the second-largest consumer of the world's water supply and pollutes the oceans with microplastics.
 - The equivalent of one garbage truck full of clothes is burned or dumped in a landfill every second.
- It takes about 2,000 gallons of water to produce a pair of jeans. That's more than enough for one person to drink eight cups per day for 10 years.
- Washing clothes releases 500,000 tons of microfibers into the ocean each year — the equivalent of 50 billion plastic bottles.
- A 2017 report from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) estimated that 35% of all microplastics (very small pieces of plastic that never biodegrade) in the ocean came from the laundering of synthetic textiles, like polyester.
- The fashion industry is responsible for 20% of all industrial water pollution worldwide.

Source: Business Insider, McKinsey & Company, Ellen MacArthur Foundation

SOLUTIONS

- 1) Get creative with what you have and find new ways to mix & match.
- 2) Host a clothing swap or exchange with friends and co-workers.
- 3) Shop at second hand stores. In addition to keeping clothing recirculating, these stores often provide valuable community services using the money you spend there.
- 4) Support designers, retailers and manufacturers that are mindful of the entire process of creating their clothes — especially those that upcycle and recycle textiles and clothing, and manage their operations in the most ethical and environmentally sustainable ways possible.
- 5) Wash your clothing inside out in cold water and hang to air dry.
- 6) Learn to repair and mend clothing for increased longevity.



Understand Fair Trade Vs Free Trade

32

There's a big difference between fair trade and free trade. It's important to recognize that fair trade empowers, creates partnerships, improves the quality of life and creates a livable wage for individuals and businesses. Also, fair trade companies generally are conscious of their environmental impact and are most often organic and pesticide free. Although free trade can make some things cheaper to purchase, it often comes at a price to those who are the most vulnerable, such as small businesses, workers and artisans.

Look for fair trade symbols on your consumables and use your purchasing power to support local businesses and producers who use and supply fair trade products, knowing that your choices can, and do, make a difference.



Ocean Pollution Facts

It is estimated that 80 per cent of marine litter makes its way to the ocean gradually from land-based sources via storm drains, sewers, and other routes. The majority of the garbage that enters the ocean each year is plastic.

Other pollutants include:

- ★ Oil from boats, airplanes, cars, trucks, and lawn mowers.
- ★ Chemical discharges from factories, raw sewage overflow from water treatment systems, and stormwater and agricultural runoff.
- ★ Toxic by-products from the oil and gas industry's routine operations.
- ★ Noise from ships, oil and gas exploration, military exercises.

Did you know that oceans cover 70 per cent of the Earth's surface and produce half of the world's oxygen thanks to phytoplankton, kelp and algal plankton?

Quick Ocean Facts

- ★ The majority of life on Earth is aquatic.
- ★ 94% of the Earth's species exist within the oceans.
- ★ Oceans regulate climate and weather patterns by transporting heat from the equator to the poles.
- ★ Oceans absorb carbon dioxide from our atmosphere.
- ★ We rely on oceans for food, transportation, tourism, leisure and industry.
- ★ The largest ocean on Earth is the Pacific Ocean, it covers around 30% of the Earth's surface and contains more than 25,000 different islands.
- ★ The second largest ocean is the Atlantic Ocean, it covers over 21% of the Earth's surface.
- ★ The third largest ocean is the Indian Ocean, it covers around 14% of the Earth's surface.

Sound waves travel farther and faster in the sea's dark depths than they do in the air, and many marine mammals like whales and dolphins, in addition to fish and other sea creatures, rely on communication by sound to find food, mate, and navigate. But an increasing barrage of human-generated ocean noise pollution is altering the underwater acoustic landscape, harming, and even killing, marine species worldwide. Source: nrdc.org

SOLUTIONS

In order to protect our oceans and their inhabitants (not to mention ourselves), we must think about how we use them and advocate for them. With all streams flowing to rivers and all rivers leading to the sea—oceans are the end point for so much of the pollution we produce on land regardless of where it is produced.

By considering all the ways our lifestyle can impact oceans we can begin to lighten our footprint and collectively make a difference.

Knowing that everything we put down the drain may end up in the sea, we can begin by simply replacing harsh cleaning products with these lighter alternatives:

Baking soda	Vinegar	Hydrogen peroxide
Lemon juice	Essential oils	Liquid castile soap
Borax	Salt	

Check out Surfrider.org. From legendary beach clean ups to educational campaigns about alternatives to plastics, they are a powerful activist network that brings awareness to the issues facing our ocean. Sources: nrdc.org, Sciencekids.co



34 Celebrate Clean and Green

When it's celebration time, remember there are lighter solutions to how we observe special occasions. Did you ever stop to wonder how we could begin to shift traditional decorations into more conscious ones?

Here are a few alternatives that add to the celebration:

Bubbles not Balloons – Balloons create more plastic in our environment and have the potential to harm birds, fish and animals that might consume them. Instead, choose a biodegradable soap and have fun blowing bubbles instead!

Birdseed Confetti – Use birdseed or rice as confetti instead of littering the streets with paper or plastic.

Use Recycled Wrap & Gift Bags – Save wrappings and gift bags that others gift to you and reuse them.

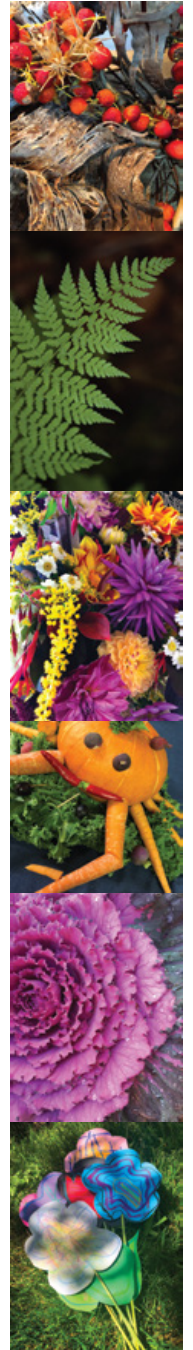
Use Nature to Decorate – Instead of purchasing decorations that will take up space in our landfills, thoughtfully use nature instead. Flowers and tree branches make unique and delightful centrepieces.

Quality Time – There's a tendency to believe that to show love or appreciation, we must buy each other more things. However, a meaningful gift that may be worn, eaten or put to good use at home or work has more value, as does spending quality time and enjoying experiences together.

Rethink Fireworks – Fireworks cause extensive air pollution in a short amount of time, leaving metal particles, dangerous toxins, harmful chemicals, and smoke in the air for hours and days. Some of the toxins never fully decompose or disintegrate, but stay in the environment, contaminating soil and water.

Fireworks also have an adverse effect on birds, butterflies, small mammals, and wild and domestic animals. Fear often causes animals to flee into roadways, which results in more vehicle damage and dead animals.

Bring Your Own Dishes & Cutlery – When packing up your contribution to a potluck or party, consider bringing your own dishes, cutlery, cloth napkins and glassware. Not only does this make it easier on the host of the party with clean up, but it avoids adding garbage to the landfill. Composting of food waste and paper will also help reduce unnecessary garbage. Sources: Terrapass.com and Westsoundwildlife.org, babywarm.org



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35 Inspire New Corporate Culture

This beautiful green roof is located at Vancity's Mount Tolmie Community LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Platinum Certified branch at 100-1590 Cedar Hill Cross Road in Saanich, BC. The building, owned by Tri-Eagle Developments, is also LEED Gold certified.

Institutions like Vancity are re-defining and inspiring a new corporate culture by being committed to building healthy communities and improving the well-being of their members and staff. As a financial cooperative, they leverage financial tools and resources to support community organizations, not for profits and businesses that share the values of building a more equitable future with a reduced impact on our environment.



They invest internally and externally in green building projects; transportation solutions; green products and services; and clean technologies like waste, water, including energy efficiency and renewable energy. Their leadership in reconciliation, socially responsible investment options (fossil fuel free), and programs like their Vancity enviroFUND (an impact investment program focused on Lighter Living for organizations who want to lighten their ecological footprint and advance sustainable lifestyles) are just a few examples of how they continue to challenge the status quo.

Do you feel inspired? Contribute to making this the norm at your work place by taking the lead to encourage change. Set-up systems to reduce waste, energy use, and encourage lower carbon transportation and consumption to help your staff and community live lighter.

Start conversations with people you know. Exchange ideas to explore the impact of food, transportation, goods, housing, leisure and personal well-being on your daily lives. Understand the context for change for your organization and to start action. You may find that you already have more allies than you expect. By supporting local businesses and organizations doing the same, everyone wins.



Combat Light Pollution & Reduce Energy Costs

When we think of pollution, we tend to think of air, water, and land pollution. However, light pollution is often overlooked, and is having serious environmental impacts on humans, wildlife, and our climate.

“The introduction of artificial light probably represents the most drastic change human beings have made to their environment,” according to research scientist Christopher Kyba. “Near cities, cloudy skies are now hundreds, or even thousands of times brighter than they were 200 years ago.”

In addition to disrupting natural sleep-wake rhythms, glare from artificial lights is having devastating effects on many bird species, sea turtles, trees, insects, and amphibians.



Reykjavik street art, artist unknown

Every year millions of birds die colliding with needlessly illuminated buildings and city towers due to artificial lighting. This can also cause birds to migrate too early, or too late, and miss ideal climate conditions for nesting and foraging.

Did you know there are people who have never seen stars in the night sky due to excessive artificial light pollution?

Solutions include switching to motion activated, sensor controlled lighting that only comes on when and where it is needed. Lights can be shielded, pointed downwards, and made to be no brighter than is necessary to maximize their effectiveness. Blue light can be minimized to prevent confusing artificial light for daylight.

Celebrate Dark Skies

Dark Sky International is a worldwide non-profit organization that offers education and solutions for combating light pollution both residentially and commercially. Many institutions are now adopting Dark Sky compliant lighting.

Programmable controls make it easy to turn off lights and maximize the energy saving benefits of heating, cooling, and ventilation systems. One west coast company leading the way with integrated building controls, has sustainability rooted in all aspects of their corporate culture.

Reliable Controls is a multi-award winning firm that offers simple, flexible, and sustainable controls which balance comfort, efficiency, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions of commercial buildings all around the world.

Unlike other manufacturers, their products have been intentionally designed to be backwards compatible, and are designed, produced, and manufactured at their Victoria, B.C. main headquarters.

The quality of their products and services, has earned Reliable Controls the reputation and brand recognition of having the most satisfied customers in the building automation industry.

the ART of Building Sustainability



1 **CERTIFIED OPEN STANDARDS**

Ensure a strong level of interoperability by using open protocols which have third-party listing laboratories to verify adherence to your protocol's form and function.

2 **SECURE DATA**

Employ a single sign on (SSO) architecture with compliance to scalable credentialing architectures and secure tunneling methodologies such as BACnet virtual private networks (B/VPN).

3 **INTEGRATED FAULT DETECTION & DIAGNOSTICS**

Specify integrated FDD (IFDD) that delivers real-time fault detection, step-by-step root-cause diagnostics while using all your existing cabling structures, including twisted-pair networks.

4 **OWNERSHIP OF ANALYTICS**

Insist on timely analytics for all stakeholders with complete control of formatting and scheduling while retaining full ownership of your data and the reports generated.

5 **SINGLE-APP EXPERIENCE**

Create better-connected spaces with real-time access to occupancy, lighting, ventilation, and thermal comfort levels, using a holistic single app on the occupant's mobile device.

Select lifecycle-centric manufacturers who minimize the negative impacts of waste with long-term warranty and repair services while adhering to WEEE, RoHS and LEED directives.

6 **MINIMAL WASTE**

Enjoy the long-term benefits of suppliers who engineer a path forward to new technologies while remaining backwards compatible without third-party gateways or hardware replacement.

7 **BACKWARD COMPATIBLE**

Stay on top of regular advances in technology with supplier-certified, multi-lingual online educational videos, technical documentation, software updates, and advanced face-to-face classroom courses.

8 **OPERATOR TRAINING**

Choose from a global network of factory-certified service partners who are passionate about long term, consistent, local support for you and your buildings.

9 **FACTORY-CERTIFIED SERVICE**

Sustainability requires a high level of integration between HVAC, lighting, and security systems. The art of building sustainability skillfully combines this integration with other technological and supporting elements that must endure over the long term. When these additional elements are maintained over the life of your building, true building sustainability emerges. To learn more about the ART of Building Sustainability please visit reliablecontrols.com/TABS11CU19

Better by design™

Reliable[®]
controls

37 Support Sustainable Neighbourhoods

What does the community of your dreams look like to you? Imagine how it would look, smell, taste, sound and feel. Imagine living in a cozy, quiet, energy-efficient home, in an active and inclusive neighbourhood where the cost of your monthly utility bills are a fraction of conventional rates, food gardens and nature surround you, walking, biking, car and tool sharing are the norm and your neighbours truly know and support you?



Imagine members of this community having opportunities for economic exchange and support with skill sharing and time banking. Perhaps more importantly, the community will focus on creating deep resilient social connections while providing a wide array of shared activities. All of this in a community made of diverse groups of people that allows residents to live life fully regardless of age, education or other background differences.

This is the vision of a Vancouver Island father and his young son for a neighbourhood in the Cedar area of Nanaimo. They are bringing action to their intention, with the creation of what could become one of the most ecologically sound, livable, cost effective, friendly communities in the world, setting an example for what's possible internationally.

In addition to social benefits, it will have independent self-sustaining systems for water, heat, electrical, sewer and food production, plus long term cost savings that benefit both the planet and residents. Inspired about what's possible? Visit futuresforward.org to learn more.



Did you know it's now possible to build structures that are carbon negative, fireproof, soundproof, non-toxic, earthquake, mold and pest resistant, air permeable, can mitigate electro magnetic frequencies (EMF), have an extremely long lifespan, don't require timber framing or vapour barriers, and are energy efficient with insulation values well beyond current standards?

Creatively United has produced a short documentary about the first home of its kind in the world called *A Home Building Revolution – The Harmless Home*.

Located in East Sooke on southern Vancouver Island, near Victoria, BC, this video showcases what's possible using Canadian made construction technology and materials.

Made from industrial hemp and lime, the sequestration of carbon begins in the field and carries on through the entire manufacturing process and build. Less water, energy, money, and resources are required to create these buildings that can last hundreds of years and drastically reduce construction waste.

Hemp and lime have been used together for centuries, with the Pyramids and Great Wall of China attesting to its longevity. What makes this technology truly revolutionary is not just the impressive list of benefits it offers, but that it provides solutions for climate change, opportunities for a construction revolution and simultaneously supports Canadian hemp farmers and farmland preservation.

LIVING FULLY SUSTAINABLY



- 1 Solar Panel Roof
- 2 Passive Solar Sunspace for Energy and Food
- 3 Lime Plaster External Wall Finish
- 4 Deck for Food Production and Pollinator Garden
- 5 Heat Recovery Ventilator
- 6 High Efficiency Toilet
- 7 Recirculating Shower System with Greywater Recycling
- 8 Dense Pack Recycled Cellulose Insulation
- 9 Just BioFiber Hemp/Lime Wall Block System
- 10 Dense Pack Recycled Cellulose
- 11 Rainwater Collection to Underground Cistern
- 12 Perlite Structural Insulation Under Cistern Floor
- 13 Castor or Soy Oil Based Spray Insulation Foam
- 14 Tempered Ventilated Crawspace, Recycled Aggregate Concrete, No thermal Bridging

CREATING GREEN NEIGHBOURHOODS WITH COMMUNITY IN MIND

For more information email info@futuresforward.org or call 1-778-928-3698

Lighten Up & Recharge

39

Did you know meditation can reduce stress, control anxiety, enhance self-awareness, improve sleep, lengthen attention span, promote creativity, increase academic and work performance, improve social skills, reduce substance abuse and reactivity, promote happiness, and enhance mental and physical health?

By sitting quietly, closing your eyes, and focusing on your breath, a simple word, or sound for just 10 to 20 minutes each day, you can reduce stress and improve mental focus to help you handle the stressors of daily life.

Meditation isn't about stopping thoughts. Instead, when thoughts form, they should simply be allowed to pass by returning to your focus. In this way, you can become better equipped to let bad thoughts pass so you can concentrate on good thoughts and important tasks. Consider quiet time for yourself equally as important as all the other demands on your day.

This gift of "me" time is a chance for your brain to work out the stresses and problems it's trying to solve. Albert Einstein was reported to have come up with his biggest discoveries by doing this. Consider quiet time for yourself equally as important as all the other demands of your day.

40

Create Your Own Power

Thanks to the sun, solar energy is the cheapest and most abundant clean energy source in the world. It can provide power 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

A few solar facts:

- As long as there is light in the sky, solar will be a viable energy source.
- There's enough solar energy hitting the Earth every hour to meet all of humanity's power needs for an entire year.
- Solar photovoltaic (PV) systems don't produce noise or chemical pollution while generating electricity.
- Solar is extremely safe and there is virtually no risk of chemical leaks, explosions or fire, unlike other energy sources.
- Solar PV systems don't have moving parts and are very low maintenance, with panels lasting more than 40 years.
- Solar energy helps reduce Green House Gas (GHG) emissions, saves money and energy, plus supports local, clean energy jobs.
- Solar panels combined with batteries that store excess energy can provide completely independent - "off the grid" - electricity that is not reliant on other energy sources and can be used when there is no sunlight.
- Innovation and competition in the electricity storage space (including Tesla, LG, and Mercedes) has seen battery costs drop dramatically.

41 Rise Above Negativity

One of our biggest deterrents to happiness is becoming stuck in negative thinking. We all do it, but there's good reason to practice rising above those critical dialogues or hopeless perspectives. It has been shown that negative brain activity can lead to a compromised immune system.

Also, when we look at the world through a pessimistic lens we tend to become disempowered as to the difference we can make to ourselves, our community, and our planet. To shift out of a gloomy space, think about the possibilities rather than the challenges.

Choose something you would like to make a difference with and instead of complaining about it, suggest and act on a solution!

***“Stay away from negative people.
They have a problem for every solution.”***

— Albert Einstein

- Solar Energy is cheaper than fossil fuels and grid electricity. Solar energy costs as little as 4.3 cents per kWh on an unsubsidized basis, cheaper than nearly every option for new fossil-fuel power plants. The cheapest fossil fuel option is natural gas, which costs between 4.2 and 7.8 cents per kWh.

Source: Lazard's Levelized Cost Of Energy Analysis - Version 11.0

- In addition to reducing energy costs, solar PV systems enhance the resale value of houses and buildings, allowing owners to recoup some, if not all, of the cost associated with installation.
- Not only can solar energy power trains, cars, trucks, and even space stations, but in 2016 Swiss pilot and professional explorer, Bertrand Piccard, flew a solar-powered plane around the world with no additional power source other than the sun to demonstrate what is possible.
- Solar is the fastest and most resilient energy source to deploy. When disaster strikes, no electricity source can be built or repaired as quickly as solar.

Sources: CarbonTrack.com, www.fool.com

Wheel Fun 42



Moving our bodies and getting outside increases our sense of well-being. As we move towards a carbon-negative future, it is important that we consider alternative transportation methods, with much less environmental impact, to get us where we are going.

Electric bikes are getting more people riding, especially those who didn't think cycling was for them. They're a great form of transportation, less stressful on the body than regular bikes, allow us to cover longer distances, and are lots of fun to ride. When we set out on a two-wheeled adventure we revisit the excitement of being a child again.

Idling Gets Us Nowhere 43

- Walk, cycle, and use public transit more.
- Reduce or eliminate the need to travel — both for long and short distances.
- Ensure your personal car or company fleet is operating efficiently. Plan to switch to electric alternatives. Electric vehicles may be cheaper to maintain as their engines are simpler than their gas counterparts.
- Find alternatives to personal car ownership, such as car sharing.
- Retrofit your engine from gas to electric for about half the price of a new electric vehicle. A typical conversion, using all new parts, costs between \$5,000 and \$10,000 (not counting the cost of the donor vehicle or labour). Source: www.howstuffworks.com
- Watch the *Future of Transportation* video as part of the Solutions series at CreativelyUnited.org

Engine exhaust contains 40+ harmful toxins and they all go into the air we breathe!!

Cancer and lung disease are on the rise, any surprise?

We must support alternative, clean sources of energy!

Idling for 5 minutes produces about .25 kg (or 1/2 lb) of greenhouse gases. Canadian drivers idle 5-10 minutes a day

Idling is not an effective way to warm up your vehicle. Driving a vehicle cuts warm up time in half

Save \$\$\$ Don't idle!

Clean air quality is a shared responsibility!

10 seconds idling uses more gas than stopping and restarting the engine. If stopped more than 10 seconds (except in traffic) it's more economical to turn off the engine

Children & animals are more vulnerable to air pollution: they breathe faster and inhale more air per kg. of body weight

Poorly tuned engines use 10% more energy

Idling gets you nowhere!



Idling is now illegal in many communities • PLEASE DO NOT IDLE!

SOURCES: data canada, the sierra club, idle free ontario. Fuel use will vary with vehicle and driving conditions.

Create Integrated & Sustainable Public Transportation Strategies **44**

Planning sustainably means that we balance the needs of people, communities and the greater environment. It means creating systems of efficiency while respecting our planet. One way we can do this is to walk, bike, car share and take public transit.

We must begin to bring more green practices into our public transport system as well as create an integrated strategy that supports all citizens equally.

The best results would be fewer vehicles on the road while creating deeper neighbourhood connections.



45 Meetings In Motion

The best way to keep meetings interesting is to change the space that you hold them in. There is no requirement to have a seated meeting in an office. In fact, sitting for long periods of time has many recognized health risks and is considered more dangerous than smoking.*

For this reason, walk/talk meetings are growing in popularity. By moving our bodies outside in nature, our circulation increases, resulting in us feeling brighter and lighter.

*Source: startstanding.org



Greta Thunberg showed the world that options to flying exist by crossing the Atlantic ocean in a sailboat instead of flying. While not everyone can jump on a sailboat to their next destination, we can reduce our travel footprint by:

- Discovering unique places closer to home instead of flying abroad.
- Refusing plastic on flights by refilling your own large bottle of water just prior to boarding your flight and reducing in-flight consumption.
- Staying in one location for an extended period of time and thoroughly exploring that destination on foot, bike, bus, electric vehicles and minimizing vehicle travel by planning trips carefully.
- Supporting local small scale businesses, smaller boutique hotels, and privately owned rentals where there is a limit on the size of the development and sustainability is practiced.
- Minimizing towel washing, long showers, baths, linen and towel changes.
- Volunteering for social and environmental projects at your destination.
- Supporting farmers markets and local artisans by buying locally produced food, goods and services.
- Be respectful by reducing your waste. Compost and recycle as much as you can.
- Invest in offsets by making donations of time, expertise and/or funds with grassroot organizations and charities who stand for what you value.
- Check out organizations like the Rainforest Alliance who are focused on educating the public on how to transform their travel into an adventure that benefits all.



47 Adopt a Tree or Many!

Trees offer a multitude of benefits that many of us take for granted. Scientists are now discovering that trees are far more sophisticated and valuable as a living resource than we ever imagined.

Here are just a few of the many benefits trees offer:

- 🌲 Trees give us food, fruit, medicine, shelter, shade, beauty and serenity.
- 🌲 Without trees the Earth would be uninhabitable by humans.
- 🌲 Trees are the planet's lungs and good for our lungs. Trees breathe out oxygen, we breathe in purified air.
- 🌲 Trees clean and purify air and create fertile soil.
- 🌲 Residents living on streets with mature trees have reduced levels of asthma.
- 🌲 Trees provide habitat for wildlife, endangered species, insects, other plant life and people.
- 🌲 Trees increase neighbourhood pride, provide a sense of place and have historical significance.
- 🌲 Trees have significant economic value and increase real-estate values by 3-15%. Neighbourhoods with mature trees are generally the highest priced neighbourhoods.
- 🌲 Treed commercial areas encourage customers to linger and shop at local businesses.
- 🌲 Tree roots bind the soil and fight erosion by shielding it from the drying effects of wind and sun.
- 🌲 Trees help people save money on energy bills by providing cooling shade in summer and breaking the wind in winter.
- 🌲 In addition to providing cooling shade (up to 10 degrees less), trees are constantly transpiring a fine mist of water pulled up by the roots that then cools and freshens the air. A mature oak can transpire as much as 100 gallons of water a day.
- 🌲 Tree shade is better ecologically than shade from a building because leaves filter rather than block light, allowing under-story plants to grow.
- 🌲 Trees store carbon and help regulate global warming. Protecting mature trees and planting new trees is the number one way to help mitigate climate change.
- 🌲 Trees maximize watershed health, biodiversity, and conservation of sensitive ecosystems.
- 🌲 Trees offer privacy from neighbours and buildings.

🌲 Cutting mature and old growth trees severely disrupts nature's balance by destroying long-established, nutrient-rich ecosystems that support food systems and habitats. Nature depends on the balance that forests provide.

🌲 Mosses and mushrooms that inhabit the soil around trees are said to interconnect forests as part of an organic communications network.

🌲 Trees provide food and habitat to thousands of species, especially birds. Oak trees support more species of moths and butterflies than any other tree, thus providing food for all types of birds.

🌲 Trees stimulate our senses by offering beauty to our eyes and music to our ears with the sights and sounds of birds, beautiful designs, foliage, etc.

🌲 Trees make wonderful living memorials to honour loved ones.

🌲 Trees offer protection from heat, wind, rain and noisy traffic or neighbours.

🌲 Trees filter pollutants and absorb storm water runoff, reducing the cost of storm water management in communities.

🌲 Trees make communities safer and contribute to fewer traffic accidents by providing a calming effect that results in less crime and reduced traffic speeds.

🌲 By shading asphalt and other dark surfaces, trees cool the urban area allowing the asphalt to last 10-25 years longer.

🌲 Trees are the hardest working, non-paid labourer on the planet, working 24/7, 365 days a year creating all the benefits listed above and more!

🌲 Trees are great for relaxing under and peaceful to be around.

🌲 Trees are perfect for hugging when you don't have a friend nearby.

Size Matters!

A few facts about mature trees:

There is no substitute for mature trees. It can take up to 200 saplings to create the climate benefits of one mature tree. Maximum benefits to natural ecosystems come from larger, older trees with sizeable root and canopy masses.

Mature trees are the most resilient. They have withstood the test of time, weather, and humans. Despite being damaged by cars, roads and other extreme events, mature trees should be championed and protected.





Healthy mature trees, including those more than 100 years old, can often survive extreme storms and do not have to be removed if their damaged limbs are properly pruned and given time to recover.

Mature trees increase property values. Often the most coveted places to live are those neighbourhoods with the most mature trees.

One of the biggest reasons why mature trees fall or fail is due to improper planting and pruning, according to arborist and municipal urban forester, Ryan Senechal, who advocates for protecting and preserving mature trees.

"The single greatest impact to the urban forest comes from the incremental loss of green space associated with development and densification. In addition to removal of large mature trees, there is a loss of soils and space that could be used for future generations of trees."

City of Victoria Urban Forest Master Plan (2013)

It's a myth that mature trees should be feared.

According to Christopher Roddick, author of *The Tree Care Primer* and head arborist at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, "planting new trees is a fantastic ambition; the old saying goes that the best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago, and the second best time is today. But it can take 25 to 30 years before a new tree is large enough to start giving a return on ecosystem service investments: the environmental costs associated with growing and planting a tree are far greater than those the tree provides until the tree has reached a certain age, size, and output level."

"The sad truth is that the survival rate of new plantings in many cities is only 7-13 years on average and 30 years for suburban trees. Mature trees offer the most benefits when it comes to the environment.

Oddly enough, tree planting initiatives themselves can sometimes be a culprit in mature tree removal. City officials and builders have a far easier (and sometimes profitable) time removing older trees for development when they are allowed to simply plant multiple new trees to "replace" those chopped down. Unfortunately, given survival rates and the pace of land development, many of those new trees may never reach the point of providing a net ecological benefit, much less equalling the benefits of a mature tree."

Roddick sums it up like this: "Ask any arborist why people hire them and, more often than not, the number one answer is fear. People do love their trees, but most call an arborist because they are afraid of big trees or big branches falling on their houses. While there are many reasons to hire a tree care professional, it's fear that actually makes people open their wallets.

The fact is, trees do fall over and do hurt people – that's why tree care is so important. But how afraid should we really be? The odds are much greater that a person will die falling out of bed (about 500 a year in the U.S.) than being killed by a falling tree (fewer than 50). People's fears don't always match the likelihood of bad things actually happening, because one of the down sides of having a large brain is also having a vast imagination."

"Trees or wooded environments of particular value can be protected on private property by registering a tree protection or natural state covenant on the land title. Where a tree on private land is deemed to be significant, the City could also consider helping the homeowner to care for and protect the tree.

Another approach might be to provide financial incentives, such as a small reduction in municipal property tax or storm water utility bill, for people with a significant tree on their property."

City of Victoria Urban Forest Master Plan (2013)



How to Protect Trees

- Learn more about the trees you see every day.
- Get involved with local community groups or neighbourhood associations that advocate for trees, or start your own group.
- Follow the Community Trees Matter Network on Facebook. Stay engaged with the CreativelyUnited.org Solutions Hub by sharing information, ideas, events and resources.
- Ask your town or city about volunteering to plant trees or remove invasive species on public land.
- Attend area council meetings and ask for stronger protection of public trees and incentive programs to help maintain private trees as part of the regional climate action strategy.
- Lobby local government to buy private land to convert to public forests and parks.
- Advocate to local government to require developers to build carefully around mature trees.
- Ask your local government to fund incentive programs to reward private land owners or developers for retaining trees beyond bylaw requirements.
- Develop and maintain strong community-wide support for urban trees.
- Urge local government to manage the urban forest in a way that maximizes watershed health, biodiversity, and conservation of sensitive ecosystems.
- Ask your local government to hire experienced experts with knowledge of permaculture, conservation and landscape ecology.
- Consider creating your own legacy with the gift of a land or a tree covenant.

Planting Tips & Tree Care

It can take up to three years of care to ensure a sapling survives and thrives. Here are a few tips to consider when planting saplings and trees from Christopher Roddick's *Tree Care Primer* and municipal urban forester, Ryan Senechal:

- 🌲 Think to the future and find the best possible location it could remain for decades free from human intervention (ie: telephone lines, cars, driveways, sidewalks, intended development).
- 🌲 Pick a species that can establish itself quickly, is draught and pest resistant, and resilient. Trees that are native to the region and have survived the longest are generally the most resilient and the best choice.
- 🌲 Be sure to research the best growing conditions for your species and pick the most appropriate location.
- 🌲 Give your new tree the best chance of survival by giving it adequate soil type and volume for best outcomes in tree health and stability. Leave plenty of room for it to grow with no heavy or sustained weight on its roots zone. Protect it from being eaten or disturbed.
- 🌲 The best time to plant a tree is during the dormant season when soil conditions are moist, rainfall is intermittent, and planting materials are available.
- 🌲 Be sure to water and care for your tree. Early morning watering is considered best. Avoid watering the tree's foliage or watering during the heat of the day. The first three years are critical to getting your tree established. Water and mulch are essential to its survival. Call on municipal arborists or ISA Certified Arborists for help.
- 🌲 Once the young tree is established, stake to ensure a solid structural foundation and prune as required.
- 🌲 Protecting the tree's root zone and maintaining proper soil biology through mulching is critical for ensuring healthy mature trees.
- 🌲 For very old or dying trees, techniques like retrenchment pruning to reduce canopy, cabling and bracing to support limbs, root monitoring, and safety evaluations become important.

A tip about pruning:

"It's not as simple as knowing how to cut; it's knowing how much, when, where, and how many times to prune that makes the decisions difficult and requires specialized training and skills," warns Christopher Roddick, who recommends hiring a skilled arborist trained in age appropriate tree care (AATC).

Sources: Tree Care Primer by Christopher Roddick, ecolandscaping.org, City of Victoria Urban Forest Master Plan, Safe Streets

48 Zen Your Yard Care

Want to help address climate change and reduce your emissions? Switch your gas powered mowers and blowers to quieter, smog free rechargeable battery and electric alternatives and let your friends, family, municipal authorities, lawn and yard maintenance companies know that healthy options exist.

Air and noise pollution from gas-powered lawn and yard maintenance is not only annoying to your neighbours, but is also harmful to your health and the environment.

The World Health Organization recommends that general daytime outdoor noise levels should not exceed 55 decibels (dB), however, the average gasoline powered lawnmower and leaf blower ranges between 75 and 105 dB. Considering that hearing loss occurs around 90 dB, it's no surprise that it's hard to escape the noise of a leaf blower or lawn mower.

Despite their small size, gas-powered lawn mowers produce excessive amounts of air pollution. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, a gasoline-powered lawn mower operating for an hour emits smog-forming emissions equivalent to 40 automobiles. In addition, more than 17 million gallons of fuel, mostly gasoline, is spilled each year while refuelling lawn equipment, contaminating groundwater. Source: peoplepoweredmachines.com

49 Harvest Your Own Fresh Water Supply

Water is a finite resource that we often take for granted. To survive, humans need a reliable freshwater source. Increased population density in our communities puts pressure on streams, lakes, and aquifers for meeting our water supply needs.

Harvesting rainwater reduces the pressure on these water sources by returning it locally through outdoor uses or an onsite wastewater treatment system.

During a rainstorm, much of the rainwater runs off as stormwater especially in urban areas with impermeable surfaces. On small coastal islands, as much as 80% of rainwater is lost as runoff to the ocean. Rainwater harvesting systems allow us to capture fresh water and store it for later use.

Rainwater harvesting can:

1) Reduce the strain of increasing development on conventional freshwater sources like community water systems and aquifers, especially in dry seasons when water use is high. These rainwater harvesting systems typically meet outdoor water needs for watering plants and gardens (irrigation).

2) Provide the primary water supply to private homes and businesses in rural areas instead of a well – especially where:

- there is no other readily available fresh water source
- groundwater yields are too low to fulfill water needs (combined system of groundwater and rainwater)
- groundwater is too deep and therefore expensive to access
- groundwater has naturally elevated salt or metal content
- groundwater resources have become contaminated.

3) Reduce stormwater runoff and resulting erosion by collecting and storing the rainwater for later use (active harvesting) or by intercepting runoff, slowing it down, and letting it infiltrate into the ground (passive harvesting).

Remember that all the water on our planet is ALL that we have.



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Invest Responsibly

How we invest has an effect on the world we live in. We have a choice to invest responsibly and need to take the time to understand the companies we do business with.

Ask your financial institution how it supports the local economy. Do they follow zero waste management principles, offer socially responsible programs, embrace fossil free fuel alternatives with a low carbon footprint, and work with suppliers who share those values? Get to know their values and make sure they are aligned with your own.

Often, credit unions and community banks have accountability practices that larger banks do not have. With the environment and climate change being such important issues, we must educate ourselves on how our money is being used.

When we choose to entrust our money with organizations that support local businesses, non-profits, and ethical and sustainable work practices, everyone wins! So get curious and start asking questions. If it's the right place for you to invest, they will happily share with you how they walk their talk.

Register to Vote **51** and Vote Your Values

Virtually nothing in our society is untouched by our political choices. The rules and taxes that govern what we wear, drive, where we live, work, study and play is rooted in government policies at the municipal, provincial and federal levels.

Voting is a practice of exercising our democratic rights! Not voting is, essentially, a vote for others to decide the election for you.

Voting has garnered each of us many of the freedoms that we enjoy today. Voting gives us a voice in the government and is a privilege that also honours those who fought for our freedoms. And, it wasn't that long ago that women and minorities were not allowed to vote.

Getting more people to vote is extremely important. Encourage your friends and family to vote for the candidate that best speaks to their values and would best represent their neighbourhood and region.

Remember that paid advertisements are just that and may be misleading. Research each candidate and, if they represent a political party, visit those websites to review their platforms.

Elections Canada offers a variety of voter information, including how to register to vote.



Leave a Legacy 52

Wouldn't you sleep better knowing that your life's energy went into making a lasting difference? Wise investment decisions could produce a legacy of helping the causes you most believe in.

A lot of community good can be created by planning one's estate with community organizations and projects in mind. Having numerous benefactors in a will can lead to making a big difference in the lives of many.

For example, if you love trees, consider leaving funds for your local conservancy group to help purchase biodiverse places that deserve to be protected; or contribute to organizations that support Indigenous rights; or advocate for bears, wolves, human rights, local food, farmland, etc.

Most grassroots non-profits and charities operate with a handful of dedicated volunteers doing a lot of the heavy lifting. They could use the support of a donation to help in a myriad of ways. New parks can be purchased and trees preserved to provide lasting value. Leave a legacy by letting your money and assets speak to your values.



*Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot,
nothing is going to get better. It's not.*
— The Lorax



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53 Imagine the Possibilities

When we dare to dream big, we discover alternatives and solutions to the problems of our time. We do this by encouraging creativity in both our lives and our thinking. Creativity is the spark of imagination. It allows us to imagine new possibilities and bring them to life.

Imagine if we had:

- Affordable housing
- Fresh and healthy food and water for all
- Less fossil fuel dependency
- Fully self-sustaining neighbourhoods
- Rewarding work for everyone
- Equity and equality
- Guaranteed Income
- Free education, transit, and healthcare
- Climate solutions in action

There are many solutions that already exist. We need to keep imagining and take that a step further into action.

Here's a few ways action can begin:

- Volunteer with local non-profits
- Get involved with community associations and organizations, or start your own
- Share your vision of a better tomorrow
- Plant a food garden
- Compost and recycle
- Carpool, take public transit, or ride a bike
- Change your diet to more plant-based foods
- Find ways to reduce waste and consumption
- Let your voice be heard: submit Letters to the Editor of your local publications, get to know your local media
- Connect with your local politicians and express your ideas and concerns. Attend council meetings


Commit to the 54 Idea of Community

Community is one of the least tapped resources. When people come together they have even more power to create change through the power of their integrated networks than one individual.

Communities have the ability to inspire, connect, support and share. By working on common goals, building bonds of friendship, and collaborating, we can increase our experience of happiness, sense of belonging and feel more empowered.

What community could you reach out to today that you've always been curious about? We bet they would welcome your knowledge and have their own resources to inspire your life for the better too.

Check out the PairUp directory on [CreativelyUnited.org](https://creativelyunited.org) for ideas and information about more than 170 community organizations and let us know about others so we can build community together.



"An activist is someone who cannot help but fight for something. That person is not usually motivated by a need for power, or money, or fame, but in fact driven slightly mad by some injustice, some cruelty, some unfairness - So much so that he or she is compelled by some moral engine to act to make it better." — Eve Ensler

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Rethink Gender

Make Gender Neutrality the Norm

A person's sexuality has no correlation to ability, performance or personality. However, the traditional labeling of gender has caused unfair favoritism and inequity.

Everyone should have the support they need to succeed no matter how they identify. Ending discrimination is a huge argument for gender neutrality, which means that acceptance and celebration of everyone becomes the new norm.

As we lean towards re-imagining the binary descriptors for gender, we dismantle labeling that creates exclusion and prejudice. When we rethink gender, we evolve.

"Lasting peace depends on equal rights, equal opportunity and the equal participation of women"
—Lakshmi Puri

Banish Ignorance 56

Through education and learning we have the ability to shine a light on that which was previously unknown to us. By educating ourselves on other cultures, societies, beliefs, environmental and political issues we can move beyond our ignorance.

Take some time to learn something new! What is it you'd like to know? Grab a pen, a notepad or keyboard and make a list of things you'd like to know more about. Try to cross off one topic from your list every week.

As North Americans, we are especially privileged to have so many resources available to empower ourselves in this way.

57 Celebrate Our Differences

"Always remember that you are absolutely unique. Just like everyone else." — Margaret Mead

Look at differences between humans, plants, animals, cultures and ecosystems. Have you realized how unique, yet interconnected, we all are? Have you noticed that it's our differences that make us interdependent and that each of us brings our unique ideas, skills and outlook to any given situation? After all, there are 7.8 billion ways for humans to view and live life. It is by our common humanity that we are all united on this one planet.

So how do we celebrate variation and diversity? One way is to become curious about each other. Ask questions. Connect with new people. Educating ourselves on diversity keeps life exciting. Investigating different cultures, arts and belief systems enriches our life.

58 Share Your Point of View

It's everyone's responsibility to improve our world. Do not think that your opinion isn't important because it is. We need a diversity of opinions and views in order for our communities to grow and to find solutions to the problems that our society faces. The more people that begin to share their point of view, the better. Your voice does matter and can help others too.

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