

First Things First – 2021 Annual General Meeting

2020 Report from the Chair, Jim Beattie

In a year of unprecedented challenge presented by Covid19 the Board of First Things First Okanagan maintained a lower profile but steady presence in the climate movement. The considerable planning that had taken place to hold an Alternate Energy Event at the Penticton Lakeside was cancelled in late winter as the virus eliminated any opportunity for what would have been a large gathering.

Members of the Board quickly responded from this setback to embark on other initiatives. FTFO partnered with the En’Owkin Centre and Community Energy Association to apply for a Federal grant to promote climate awareness in the Okanagan. The application was unsuccessful but served to build partnerships and stimulate discussion on a wide range of activities that can be implemented in the future.

The time spent out of the public eye allowed the Board to polish up the newsletter, develop more expertise with social networking, and pay closer attention to linkages with other climate organizations and to establish new links with youth activists in our region. To maintain contact with supporters and members, a committee of the Board began a series of Zoom sessions they called “Deep Dive Discussions” where guest speakers presented on specific climate strategies and attendees could participate in discussion. These proved popular and are now part of our regular activities.

Finally, in the face of Covid restrictions, FTFO was able to raise climate awareness with youth by continuing to deliver the “Cool-it” program to several school classrooms in the Okanagan.

On the political front, two FTFO Board members, Margaret Holm and Nicolas Stulberg, served on the City of Penticton’s Sustainability Committee. Working with municipalities and regional districts is important to FTFO and we aim to build partnerships with elected bodies to facilitate stronger climate action. Members of the Board continued to meet throughout the year on Zoom with Federal, Provincial and Municipal leaders. In some of these meetings FTFO was joined by other climate groups and associations, partnerships that we will continue to maintain as a broad coalition for climate action grows.

The reports from Board members regarding the work of the Committees of FTFO give a more detailed picture of the work that we undertook in 2020.

I wish to offer my deepest thanks to Board members for their work under the difficult conditions they faced. FTFO came out of 2020 with a strong organization that is determined to establish climate action and climate justice as the most important issues every government and all citizens must address.

Respectfully submitted, Jim Beattie

Political Action Committee Report for 2020-2021

Members of the Political Action Committee: Margaret Holm, Jim Beattie, Mike Healey, Lori Goldman, and Sue Kirschmann. Nicholas Stulberg was also a member and the chair of this committee from July 2020 until he resigned from the board in April 2021.

2020 Activities

Strikes:

- Jan, Feb, March - a group of citizens continued the noon-hour Fridays For Future Climate strikes at City Hall, urging the city to do more to reduce emissions. Covid-19 stopped these weekly strikes.
- Sept 26 - Global Climate Strike 'Take a Stand' on Main Street.

Lobbying (done jointly by FTFO and Citizen's Climate Lobby-Okanagan):

- Met with MP Tracy Gray on climate.
- Met with MP Richard Cannings to discuss Bill C12.
- Met with MP Dan Albas on climate.

Feb 2020 – Climate Emergency Declaration presentation to the City of Penticton's Community Sustainability Advisory Committee.

June 2020 - Letter to Federal Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology on Canadian Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic asking that COVID recovery funds be directed to zero-emissions projects and just recovery goals

Sept 2020 - FTFO sponsored an all candidates meeting for the provincial election.

Nov 2020 - Presentation to City Council and letter-writing campaign to support Penticton's proposed Lake to Lake bike route.

Dec 2020 - Letter to Provincial government on Site C.

2021 Activities

Strikes and marches:

- Sep 8 - 350.org Day of Action, "Penticton's Still on FIRE" march down Main St to Gyro Park. This coincided with Penticton releasing its Community Energy and Emissions Plan. The City and FTFO both had booths set up at Gyro park.
- Sept 24 – 'Uproot the System' Global Climate Strike. This march down Main St followed by speeches at Gyro park involved numerous students as well as adults.
- July, Aug - Weekly protest outside our MLA's office against old growth logging.

Lobbying and meetings:

- March – Met with RDOS's new Senior Energy Specialist (a new position, funded by Fortis).
- MLA lobby meetings, done jointly by FTFO and BC Climate Alliance.
- Members of FTFO's youth committee met with MP Richard Cannings.

Letters:

- Feb - Letter complimenting the government for tabling Bill C-12 (The Canadian Emissions Net Zero Accountability Act) and suggesting amendments that would strengthen it.
- Feb - Letter in support of Summerland's solar project.
- Apr – Submission to RDOS recommending changes to their solar energy systems bylaw.
- May - Letter to RDOS with concerns about their proposal to downgrade the ESDP (Environmentally Sensitive Development Permit) requirements.
- June - Letter to support the City of Penticton's Emotive grant application.
- Aug – Letter to provincial government with recommendations on how to improve their 'BC Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy'
- Sept – Submission to the BC Budget 2022 Select Standing Committee on Finance with recommendations on funding allocations for building retrofits, retrofit job training programs, and improved climate action communications.

Input on surveys, budgets, and plans:

- Feb - Federal pre-budget consultation (on-line questionnaire)
- Apr – Climate Emergency Declaration presentation to the City's Sustainability Committee. This presentation was originally made in 2020 but nothing happened as Covid restrictions began shortly after.
- Apr - Penticton's Northern Gateway Plan (on-line survey)
- May - RDOS survey re BC Step Code for new buildings (on-line)
- June 16 byelection – FTFO sent questions to each of the 10 candidates asking about their plans for climate action. Our press release of the candidate's responses was posted on Castanet.
- July – Provided individual input on BC Hydro's draft 20-year Integrated Resource Plan (online survey)
- Sep - Prepared a question for the Sep 7th all candidates Climate Forum for the federal election.
- Sep 3 - Presentation to the Select Standing Committee on Finance re BC Budget 2022 (via Zoom).

Due to the ongoing Covid pandemic, lobby meetings and committee meetings were all held on-line via Zoom. Covid protocols were followed for all marches, strikes and in-person presentations.

Submitted by Sue Kirschmann

2020 Events Committee Report

2020 was a disappointing year as far as events were concerned. We had planned or were considering a number of events when Covid shut down any large gatherings. Below is a list of what was planned and what was accomplished.

1. Scheduled talk to OK Similkameen parks society AGM March 2020. Cancelled because of covid.
2. Put together an online poster event for earth day, April 22.
3. We planned a two-day EV/Energy Efficiency show to be held at Penticton Lakeside Resort. The proposed dates were April 25/26, and most of the event was organized when public health forbade large gatherings. The event was put on hold until it is again safe for large groups to gather.
4. Rick Ingram proposed holding a seminar on impact investing. We were collaborating on its organization and venue. He planned to present the one-day seminar in Penticton, Peachland and Kelowna. However, we had to cancel this plan because of covid. We had some discussion about doing the seminar online but we also set this aside until in-person events are possible.
5. We organized an online All Candidate's forum on environment of the Penticton by-election. We used a format of question and response with strict time limits as we did for our earlier Federal all candidate's meeting. The event was held October 15 and the format worked well. A reasonable number of people tuned in to hear the candidates.
5. As with most small, volunteer run organizations, FTFO has a perennial funding problem. In an attempt to get a substantial budget to help with our projects we teamed up with the En'owkin Centre, the Tempest Theatre and Film Society, BCSEA, and the Community Energy Association to submit a Climate Action and Awareness Fund proposal for significant funding (\$260,000) in October. The funding was intended to support an ambitious program of projects and activities in 2021. Sadly, the application was unsuccessful, however, given the continuing difficulties caused by the pandemic it is perhaps a blessing that we did not get all this money with expectations to deliver on our proposal. We also applied for grant from Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions to support an intern who would work in support of the projects in the CAAF proposal. This application was also unsuccessful.

Although our projects in the community were largely cancelled or put on hold because of the pandemic, FTFO has still had a very busy year as will be seen from the other committee reports.

Respectfully submitted,
Mike Healey

FTFO Communications Committee Report for 2020

Communications outreach includes monthly newsletters, composed by Margaret Holm, which reach over 600 people. Lori Goldman manages the website and writes most of the content. She is also active on social media, managing the FTFO Facebook page and Twitter account. Lori creates events and posts for local activities and reposts informative climate articles from all over the world. Hundreds more people are reached through these social media channels.

In October 2020, FTFO hosted a zoom presentation and discussion of the documentary “2040: Join the Regeneration” by Damon Gameau. About 85 people registered and a lively discussion followed the movie. Thus began the “Deep Dive” discussion series, which is a vehicle for studying climate solutions, hearing from speakers, and stimulating community discussion.

Lori Goldman was the Zoom technician, facilitating slide shows, movies, and break-out rooms. Sue Kirschmann and Margaret Holm were facilitators and hosts. All three board members worked on monthly topics and reading lists which are sent to each month’s registrants. October’s topic was “COVID, climate and recovery,” and November’s discussion was on the proposed City of Penticton Lake to Lake bicycle route.

Although the Deep Dive Zoom discussion series was proposed as an alternative way of holding meetings during the pandemic, the format will be useful to continue in the future. It allows First Things First to easily invite speakers from outside the community and people can attend from their living rooms.

Deep Dive continued in 2021 with between 25 to 60 participants. Deep Dive is intended to deepen participants’ understanding and commitment to climate action. The evening often proposed further actions such as writing letters and participating in community forums.

Submitted by Lori Goldman and Margaret Holm

First Things First Okanagan Local Actions 2020

Local actions in 2020 were greatly impacted by COVID-19 so were few and lightly attended.

In February there were a couple of actions.

This was the start of a group of locals called Nxt Steps to encourage and support individuals in reducing their emissions footprint.

The group met at the Barley Mill and continued for a while until COVID changed the world. We could not continue monthly meetings.

At the end of February, people joined Fridays For Future in an action at City Hall. About 20 people came out to show support for bolder climate action and more robust policies.

Also at the end of February, FTFO had a display at Seedy Saturday engaging with the public on climate issues. Eva Durance gave a presentation on xeriscape gardening and donated books to FTFO.

On June 5 a few people gathered at City Hall on World Environment Day.

Then next action was the Fridays For Future Global Climate Strike on Saturday, Sept 26, when about 20-30 people came out to Take a Stand along the sidewalk on Main St. near the Shatford Centre Banners, signs, chalk, and chants.

Respectfully submitted,
Lori Goldman

2020 REPORT OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE TO THE AGM, October 13, 2021

The Education Committee members were Kathleen Davies, Ruth Campbell and Barry Loewen.

The work of the committee has been one of adaptation. We have been mainly concerned with getting the BC Sustainable Energy Association (BCSAE) "Cool It!" programs in schools. It is a program that builds climate leadership by encouraging students and their families to find ways to lessen their GHG footprint. For that purpose, we have enlisted Ella Braden as the classroom workshop presenter.

Covid has changed the Cool It! program to one that can be completely online. This allowed the program to continue during in-class shutdowns of schools. It also allows the 90-minute workshop in the classroom to happen without an in-person presentation.

Covid made it more difficult to recruit classrooms as educators were stressed out and not keen to add something new to an already altered teaching situation. We are, however working on getting 8 classes signed up for this fall.

In 2020 we had 4 Grade 6 classes at KVR take the program just before the Covid shut down. In November and December there were 4 classes at Giant's Head Elementary that participated.

The program cost is \$500 per classroom plus \$500 for program presentation and facilitator costs. The full \$2500 cost for 4 classrooms is covered in Summerland by the District of Summerland. In Penticton it was covered by the city and sponsors Berry and Smith and FTFO.

Since 2007, BCSEA has:

Delivered 2,727 workshops in BC

Reached over 70,000 students & their families

Lowered greenhouse gas emissions in the province by 43,907 tonnes

Respectfully submitted,
Barry Loewen