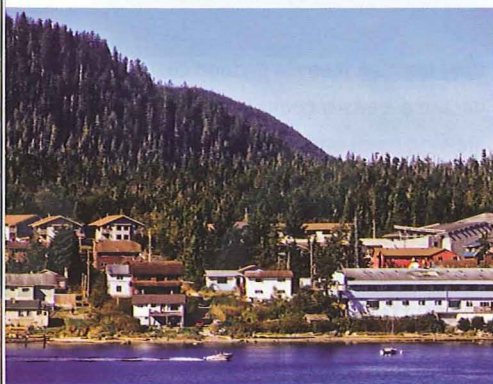


Off the beaten path

DESPITE BEING CALLED HOME BY JUST 1,250 people, Bella Bella (Waglisla) is the largest aboriginal village on B.C.'s central coast. To get here, visitors can either hop a flight from Vancouver or – for the best views – arrive by sea. En route from Port Hardy, passengers on BC Ferries' 10- to 13-hour Discovery Coast Passage Route cruise past some of B.C.'s most rugged and jaw-dropping scenery: monolithic rock formations, tumbling glacier-fed waterfalls, sheltered inlets and fjords, and often breaching whales and other wildlife.

Nowhere is it more apparent than here, where nature is at its most awe-inspiring, that preserving our natural heritage is of the utmost importance. But even in Bella Bella, home to the Heiltsuk First Nation, practising energy conservation takes effort – which is



why BC Hydro works with it and other remote communities around the province, providing residents with the knowledge and tools to reduce their power consumption. In fact, since working with residents over the winter to implement measures that reduce energy use in the home, Bella Bella has reduced its projected yearly energy consumption by 245 MWh – the equivalent of powering 22 of the community's 400 homes. Plus, says Josh Carpenter, Heiltsuk Tribal Council Operations Manager, "they're staying warmer and it's costing them a lot less." – T.S.

Running for Change



URBAN BEEKEEPER

Wieck's backyard hive is helping to combat the declining bee population.



West Vancouver resident Angela Wieck may not have started out with plans to become an eco-advocate in her community, but one thing tends to lead to another. "I think if you see something that can be done, you just do it," says Wieck. "You can start small, and little steps lead to bigger steps."

Wieck, a mother of three living in West Vancouver, credits many of her eco-friendly habits to her upbringing in a frugal household: "We didn't buy very much, we reused things. The thermostat was kept low. In a way, my childhood was very green, though it wasn't recognized as such."

Today, Wieck, a Team Power Smart member, still carries out the practices she learned growing up – though with an eye to saving the environment as well as money. She air dries her laundry year-round by hanging it around the house, and though she and her husband both work from home, they keep the thermostat low during the day, turning it up only when the kids come home. For their part, the kids pack garbage-free lunches and reusable water bottles for school, and are conscious not to put clothes in the laundry unless they actually need cleaning.

Such eco-conscious choices, ingrained into daily life, have gradually led to others. Wieck recently took up urban beekeeping to help combat the declining bee population, setting up a hive

in the backyard. And at her daughters' school, she publicized BC Hydro's school outreach program and orchestrated a contest for kids to win a game of Earthopoly by sharing what they do to protect the environment.

In what is probably her most wide-reaching endeavour, Wieck, alongside two other local moms, founded the Eagle Harbour Fun Run (eagleharbourfunrun.com) in 2007. "We started it as a way to bring physical activity to families, and to improve the community," explains Wieck. Proceeds from the first year's run supported displaced wildlife from the Sea-to-Sky Highway building project through Eagle Ridge Bluffs, and since then proceeds have been used to give back to the community in other ways, such as improved garbage and recycling facilities at local beaches. Funds to be raised at this year's run on May 29 will go toward a local park.

"It's a real success story – the community has embraced it and it's been quite a lot of fun," says Wieck, noting the run has already grown from just 100 participants to more than 400, and donations from local businesses have been generous. "Community is what you make of it, and everyone can make a difference, even if it's small." ■

– Tiffany Sloan

