

Champion of the Environment

by Rebecca Hendry



Buddy Boyd



Barb Hetherington

Buddy Boyd, owner of Gibsons Recycling Depot, first became an environmentalist as a teenager on the streets of Montreal in 1970. That year the Bank of Montreal started a program called the BMO Youth Project, designed to provide structure, build self-esteem and help kids find their passion. “I discovered I was quite passionate about the environment,” Boyd recalls. “Ever since then I’ve tried to incorporate that into my life.” He was soon putting that enthusiasm to good work, and a couple of years later, at 17, he launched STOP, the Society to Overcome Pollution. That was followed by Tidy Tim, a recycling and cleanup program he started at Montreal’s Dawson College in 1976.

Boyd’s commitment to the environment has continued to be a driving force over the years, and five years ago he started Gibsons Recycling Depot, a business that he calls “ethical, sustainable recycling for the masses.” It is the only independent recycling depot operating in BC without any municipal, regional or private funding. “We do try to get funding,” Boyd says. “That process on its own is almost a full-time job.” Instead, the company stays afloat by offering disposal and storage services, and renting out and selling disposal bins, as well as providing rental space on its 2.5-acre property for RVs, boats and heavy equipment.

This champion of the environment certainly isn’t in it for the money. The average mall drop-off boxes take five items, typically including paper, tin cans and plastics, which are the most valuable recyclables. This system is called “single stream” recycling. Gibsons Recycling Depot accepts 21 items, and a lot of them, like e-waste (electronic waste such as broken TVs and old computers), Styrofoam and alkaline batteries are not money-makers. In fact, in some cases, they are quite the opposite. “I just paid to have 17,000 pounds of e-waste transported and disposed of,” Boyd says. “It just comes out of my own pocket.”

Gibsons Recycling Depot also deals with the ethical disposal of toxic products such as old paint cans, working directly with a company called Product Care. “This was very much needed in the Gibsons area,” says Barb Hetherington, the depot’s yard manager for the past few years. “Product Care comes up and handles the disposal correctly and responsibly.”

As public awareness grows about the environment and our impact on it, people are looking for ways to do their part. “People want to recycle more and more objects,” Hetherington says. “Some people have been stockpiling their alkaline batteries because they didn’t want to throw them away.”