

West Vancouver Memorial Library awarded LEED certification

By Julie Backer.

In June 2011, West Vancouver Memorial Library (WVML) was awarded LEED Silver certification for Existing Buildings: Operations and Maintenance. WVML is the first LEED Canada EB:O&M certified building in British Columbia and the first library in Canada to receive the award.

The LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System is a certification program administered by the Canadian Building Council that encourages and accelerates the adoption of sustainable building practices through the creation and implementation of internationally recognized and accepted tools and performance criteria.

How did a building that opened in 1950 with at least four subsequent additions over the next 60 years achieve this green status?

The staff Green Team

In 2006 a few staff members came together to do some planning for Earth Day. Out of the meeting emerged a grassroots Green Team of committed staff volunteers that conceived of better ways to save energy, reduce waste, conserve water, restrict hazardous chemical use as well as communicate the team's environmental concern to the public and other interested libraries.

One of the reasons for the success of the Green Team is that participation was completely voluntary. Team members could follow their passions and interests after bouncing their ideas off fellow team members.

Building Service Supervisor Chad Arsenault inspired colleagues with initiatives to turn off fixtures and equipment when not in use and to ramp up our recycling efforts. During the Library's extensive renovations in 2008, he and Manager of Operations Lauren Henderson ensured that materials were re-used as much as possible and that new building materials were as green as possible.

Claire Brunings does WMLV's purchasing. She decided to source stationery products from a green



WVML staff members Tara Matsuzaki, Gabriele Raasch, and Claire Brunings spread the green word. Photo by Michelle Sproule.

vendor. She also noticed the great amount of packaging waste destined for the landfill. Distressed by this, she found a local company to receive the usually non-recyclable products such as Styrofoam, plastics and discarded videos, CDs and DVDs.

Graphics technician Gabriele Raasch provided image-based signage prompting staff and the public of greener ways to operate—reminders to turn off lights and computers and notices about where to recycle within the library. Her [recycling templates](#) are available via WVML's website.

Web Librarian Sue Kent continues to ensure that there is an environmental presence on the WVML website with a [Sustainability page](#) in the About Us section. Additionally, she implemented an energy meter borrowing program for the public as well as spearheaded a move from disposable to real dishes (purchased at thrift store!) at staff events.

Librarian Tara Matsuzaki provides the public with numerous environmentally themed booklists such as ones on Global Warming, Bicycling and Save Our Planet.

She also keeps the green information flow going, notifying WVML staff of green opportunities and environmental innovations other libraries are pursuing, as well as highlighting WVML's green initiatives to others.

Other Green Team members are committed to staff lunch room composting and have replaced paper towels with cloth dishcloths and tea towels for cleaning dishes in the staff room.

Staff throughout the library help promote the green message. During Earth Week, for instance, Youth Department storytimes feature songs and stories about nature and the environment.

Ecologically friendly commuting methods such as walking, cycling, public transportation and carpooling make up 50 per cent of all staff members' trips to and from work. Particularly inspiring are the cyclists, with at least four staff members having daily roundtrip commutes of over 25 kilometres! Department storytimes feature songs and stories about nature and the environment.



Librarian Lynn Brockington – more than a fair weather cyclist. Photo by Tara Matsuzaki.

Inspiration for our LEED certification application

These ideas and initiatives proved effective. WVML's utility costs decreased and the collective stewardship of the environment united staff members in a common value. Library administration and Board members took note and were inspired to support staff efforts.

In Spring 2008, the Library Board formed its own Green Committee. By the next year, it had established a [Green Building Operations Policy](#) to

guide decisions regarding purchasing, housekeeping, solid waste management, integrated pest management, erosion control, landscape management, and plumbing.

Owing in large part to the numerous staff-driven changes, WVML was suited to become an authorized green building and began the process of applying for LEED certification. Under the leadership of the previous and current Directors of Library Services, *Ann Goodhart* and *Jenny Benedict*, WVML received LEED Silver Certification last year. The District of West Vancouver, the West Vancouver Memorial Library Board, and WVML administration and staff are proud of and thrilled with this recognition.



The people behind the Library's LEED certification (from left to right):

Claire Brunings, Library staff; Jenny Benedict, Director of Library Services; Gabriele Raasch, Library staff; Nicole Brown, Chair, West Vancouver Memorial Library Foundation; District of West Vancouver Councillor Trish Panz; Chad Arsenault, Library Maintenance Supervisor; Marcia Bergen, Chair, West Vancouver Memorial Library; Paul Tutsch, West Vancouver Memorial Library Trustee; Tara Matsuzaki, Library staff; Lauren Henderson, Library Operations Manager; Dan Roberts, Kane Consulting. Photo by Sue Kent.

In the five years between the Green Team's first casual meeting and LEED Certification in 2011, WVML's electricity consumption dropped 34 per cent, gas consumption 42 per cent, and water 68 per cent. Its sustainable purchasing policy and recycling programs mean a third less solid waste. Also, sustainability became a core value in the Library's [2011-2015 Strategic Plan](#).

West Vancouver Memorial Library looks forward to an even greener future

WVML's commitment to sustainability continues. In addition to the Board's Green Committee, the Library staff's informal Green Team is now an established Green Committee with a mandate to create an ongoing reporting structure to capture energy savings and benefits of green practices, review current practices for policy compliance, and make recommendations for new green initiatives.

What's your green story?

Share your library's green story! Join WVML staff members Sue Kent and Julie Backer at the BC Library Conference at 10:45 am on Saturday, May 12 for a Greening Your Library roundtable discussion. Come for inspiration and to share your sustainability practices and to discuss easy projects to increase our libraries' green quotient.

Julie Backer is a librarian at West Vancouver Memorial Library and an enthusiastic composter.