

Ahousaht Clean-up

When Uu-a-thluk intern Joseph Louie suggested a harbour and beach clean-up of his home locale, Ahousaht, little did he realize that the idea would spark a community-wide effort on a far-reaching scale.

On August 11, several community volunteers, Uu-a-thluk team members, and summer camp students combined their energy and positive attitudes to help clean up the Ahousaht beach, harbour, and dock.

Beginning early, those involved gathered to start cleaning and continued on all day, with volunteers coming and going through-

hands to the tidying effort. Uu-a-thluk members Dawn Foxcroft, Katie Beach, Damon Rampanen, Messer, and Louie all pitched in to ease the workload.

Messer says that the refuse removed from the dock and beach area was varied and bountiful. Bicycles, old boat parts, cans, and rotting fishing gear were all things removed from the water during the effort, as well as a lot of garbage. A partially buried car on the beach was also removed.

Both Louie and Messer see the August 11 clean-up as the first stage in a larger effort.

"The second stage will take out boats and large-scale things like that," Messer says, "and could include putting up signage that encourages people to put garbage where garbage goes – not in the ocean."

Messer says that there are many contaminants in the Ahousaht harbour – fuel, batteries, chemicals – that she and others would like to see carefully removed. The next stage of clean-up could include their extraction.

Louie agrees. "This was just another small, but important step in creating something that takes off." He also sees the clean-up as

a cog in the wheel moving Ahousaht toward growth and tourism. He believes that the revitalization currently being done to improve the Wildside Trail, as well as the August clean-up, highlight the larger picture of what community members wish to accomplish.

"Ahousaht is busy now," he says, "and people are working. The new fisheries office and gaz-

ebo have been put in, and there seems to be a driving thrust toward tourism."

Uu-a-thluk and Ahousaht member Damon Rampanen laboured all day to provide the traditional pit cook feast to the volunteers and community members closing the clean-up. As well as presenting pit-cooked vegetables and fresh barbequed salmon, Rampanen also offered the prayer song to open the dinner.

"I was taught the prayer song by Greg Charleson," Rampanen says. "The song was his son's. I felt most comfortable singing it there, in Ahousaht, for the volunteers, community members, elders, and students who all came out for the day. It felt appropriate."

Louie looks forward to more initiatives in Ahousaht to keep the forward-momentum flowing into the community.

"The clean-up is just the beginning of what people are aiming to get done there," Louie says.

Special thanks to the BC Capacity Initiatives and Clayoquot Biosphere Trust who provided funding to fuel the clean up.

"It was such a forward-thinking experience for the kids. They got to see the huge difference that they were able to make in just one day of pick up".

—Norine Messer, Uu-a-thluk Capacity Building Coordinator

out. The promise of a traditional pit cook feast at the clean-up's end kept everyone in high spirits and focused on the goal.

"It was an all-day effort," says Uu-a-thluk intern Joseph Louie. "We announced that we needed help and people came. It was a pretty busy little dock for the most part. The clean-up created a big stir in the Ahousaht community."

Louie's brainchild to clean up the Ahousaht wharf came after spending some time in his family's territory after a hiatus.

Uu-a-thluk was quick to jump on board the clean-up train and the end result was better than anyone had hoped it would be.

"I was really excited and impressed to see the kids and the adults of the community come together for the clean-up," says Uu-a-thluk Capacity Building Coordinator Norine Messer. "It was such a positive, forward-thinking experience for the kids. They got to see the huge difference that they were able to make in just one day of pick up."

An Uu-a-thluk-sponsored science camp was operating in Ahousaht during the clean-up, so the campers lent helping



Youth help dig the pit for cooking food in the ground during Ahousaht's science camp.



Cleaning up garbage on Ahousaht waterfront in August, 2010. Sometimes it takes big machines.



Clean-up organizer Joseph Louie.



Uu-a-thluk intern Damon Rampanen (left) celebrates with those who helped dig a traditional pit for cooking food during Ahousaht's science camp.

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