

Let the sparks fly!

Igniting connections between the past and future of Powell River's economy

Peter Mitchell, owner of the independent Powell River grocery store Mitchell Brothers, recently spoke with Groundswell leadership to further the community conversation about the future of Powell River's economy, environment and social well-being.

At 85+ years old, Mitchell Brothers is indeed successful. What is at the heart of this success?

Mr. Bosa opened the store in the late 1920's; my father and uncle joined in 1946 and I took over in 1981. Credit goes to them; they had a good understanding of their customers and suppliers. Loyal customers, many of whom are grandchildren of original customers, and a stable and committed staff – these contribute to our success.



Q&A WITH: Peter Mitchell, owner / operator of Mitchell Bros Merchants in Cranberry

Groundswell integrates economic, environmental and social sustainability principles. Are these important to you from a business perspective?

They're all important – a good economy, strong business relationships. The environment? I think we do an adequate job – with recycling and with how we make business decisions. With a smaller footprint, there is economy of scale and less waste. It's only right; I mean, a large percentage of the world goes to bed hungry each night. I think we are more accountable. Also, Powell River demographics are changing; there is a stronger appetite for local products, and if available, we try to offer that choice.

What are your ideas to cultivate a thriving community?

Take an inventory of what we have in the community and build on that. One thing we have is good people. People are moving here because it is an easy place to live, a safe and caring community. Find ways to expand and connect the dots between these assets. There are also economic reasons why people are moving here. More assets! Its' about connecting the dots between what we have. And then there is the ferries. (Grin) The ferries are the ferries...!

What is your definition of a sustainable, healthy economy?

A hard one...hard to define. In the time I've lived here, Powell River has transitioned. There were jobs at the mill and it seemed stable. We've learned we can't depend on one or two big employers. Small businesses can employ a lot of people and they feed off each other. A healthy economy includes stable and diverse businesses and industry.

What advice would you share with Powell River of the future?

There is a new element in Powell River, interested in creating a new economy...a bit 'alternative'. They follow their passion and believe in what they are doing. Building a business and the economy this way takes patience and hard work; but then, you are doing exactly what you want to be doing, so there's no drudgery in it. Do what you believe in.

What is it about Powell River that makes you proud?

A lot of my life revolves around my work. I'm proud of the fact that we have kept this business going for a good number of years. It's pretty impressive, and due to the good will of our customers. Their support is just one example of how people in this community care for each other. There are other examples. People in Powell River are really connected; I'm proud of that. **RL**

What is Groundswell?

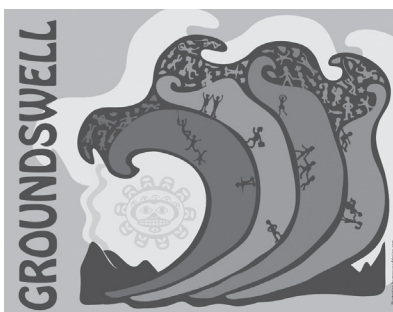
Groundswell, the January 2014 conference at VIU, brought 160 community members together for a day of inspiration, creativity, ideas, and relationships that focused on a positive future for our region.

Participants expressed a strong interest in creating a better understanding of the dynamic links between economic, social, and environmental wellbeing.

They were also eager for the conversations that started at Groundswell to make their way into the community, and to see these efforts result in concrete actions. This series is part of that effort.

To learn more: read the full Groundswell conference report: wordpress.viu.ca/ddcc/groundswell-conference/.

Please join the conversation on Facebook: [facebook.com/ddccPR](https://www.facebook.com/ddccPR)



GROUNDSWELL:

inspiring creativity, ideas, and relationships
that advance the wellbeing of our community



October 2

'THIS IS A GROUNDSWELL' a film by Claudia Medina, Zoe Ludski and Emily Wadden @ Community Living Place, 6:30pm