

Eco-Village Growing Pains

Craik, Saskatchewan leaders were enthusiastic when an advisor suggested they could go green, but ...

While most of the small communities along the highway between Saskatoon and Regina have shriveled to nothing, the residents of Craik took a proactive approach.

In 2001 sustainable and green terminology was coming in vogue. They found they could obtain identifiable notoriety and a goodly number of “green dollars” if they became an “eco village”. Besides, if they promoted themselves in the right way, by selling building lots for one dollar each they were confident they could attract more people.

Their showcase was the building of a post-and-beam Eco Centre that was a combination restaurant, golf clubhouse, meeting facility and educational centre for teaching others about environmentally sustainable technology.

People started coming with their one dollar, their minimal savings and their limited construction experience, to start building their green dream homes, but each project took much longer than the enthusiastic green-horns envisioned. Over the course of an extremely harsh winter, with little shelter to hide under, and no place to keep their straw bales in storage, they faced many bumps in the road including health issues, child custody problems, depression and threats of divorce.

Till now Craik citizens, who were long-standing conservative folks, never gave much thought to what their eco-venture would attract. Now they felt their future was jeopardized by such an assortment of folks. Little by way of neighbourly exchanges passed between the two parts of the community.

Into 2010 I understand there are now some glimmers of hope as the new comers offer their dreams and enthusiasm, and the others offer some social and practical support.

This will be an interesting venture to watch through the next decade. Their story can be instructive for all of us.

(written by Joyce Sasse)