

Photo attached: Former SLRD Board Director Russ Oakley and his wife Sandy after an informal Commemoration lunch at which he was presented a jacket by his successor, Director Debbie Demare, as thanks for his 15 years of service.

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RUSS OAKLEY RECOGNIZED FOR HIS COMMITMENT AND SERVICE TO AREA A:

Successor acknowledges former Director's dedication at informal Commemoration lunch

Bridge River Valley, BC – The office of elected official doesn't come with any uniform, personal safety gear or high visibility apparel. In 2012, however, the SLRD provided softshell jackets embroidered with the organization's logo to incumbent Board members, so elected officials representing the region could proudly wear their hearts on their sleeves.

Russ Oakley, a longtime resident of the Upper Bridge River Valley, served 5 terms from 1996-2011 as the elected representative for Area A, including four years as Chair of the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District.

When an opportunity to acknowledge his years of service presented itself, his successor in office, Debbie Demare, seized the moment.

Debbie Demare, Area A's current elected representative at the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District, has been in office since 2012. "After the first two years," she admits, "I was totally exhausted, just from the travel. It's taken me this time to really appreciate the level of service that's involved and the commitment it takes for someone from Area A to represent our community. Because of the amount of travel and the type of travel involved, it still astounds me that Russ dedicated 15 years to this region and the role."

Others have joked that Russ' greatest achievement after fifteen years of service on the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District was remaining alive. Commuting from Gold Bridge to the SLRD in Pemberton is a 452km trip on some of the worst roads in BC.

Oakley didn't just drive those roads. He tirelessly lobbied to improve them – his persistence eventually forged a partnership with BC Hydro that funded roadside barricades on Road 40 along the Carpenter Reservoir.

While he was not able to fully move the dial on the conditions of the Hurley River Road, Oakley helped instigate the creation of the Gwyneth Lake Provincial Park off the Hurley River Road, through his involvement in the Land and Resource Management Planning process.

Other contributions to the people of the Bridge River Valley, the SLRD and the Province include:

- Assisting with the restoration of the Bridge River Valley Flying Association and improvements to the Gun Lake airstrip for community purposes;

- Providing encouragement, support, guidance and funding for the Bridge River Valley 9 hole golf course;
- Leading the community restoration of the Bralorne Church, saving this historic jewel of the Bralorne Community from decaying oblivion;
- Providing support and grants-in-aid to the Bralorne Community Hall, Museum and baseball diamond;
- Serving as the Fire Warden for his area and providing leadership through the devastating interface forest fires of 2009;
- Keeping the Bridge River Valley Economic Development Society alive, enabling it to evolve into the now vibrant Bridge River Valley Community Association.

Demare personally ordered a custom SLRD jacket for Oakley to commemorate his years of service. She informally presented it to him, on behalf of all the residents of the Upper Bridge River Valley that he so ably represented, at a lunch on January 29.

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