

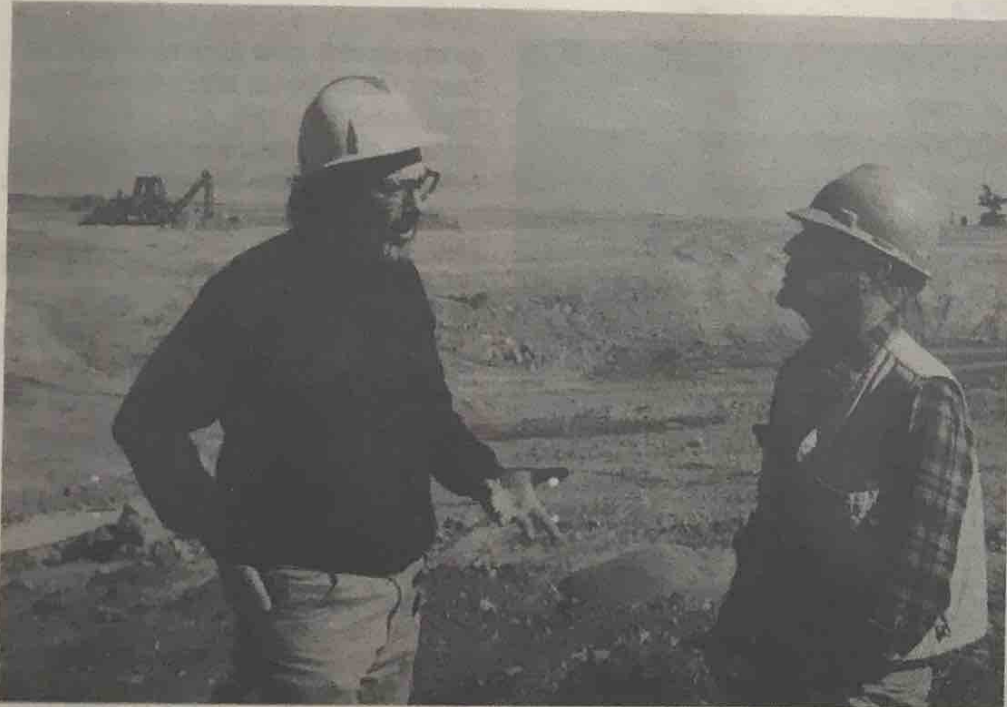
— The Tsolum Watershed Revisited

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Island CATHOLIC NEWS

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by Rev. Charles A.E. Brandt, Black Creek
Chair of Tsolum River Enhancement Committee and of TH
Comox Valley Chapter of the Steelhead Society



Father Charles Brandt (left) at site—"It is a scientific fact that the amount of copper that finds its way yearly into the Tsolum watershed kills young salmon and deters adult salmon escaping back to the river to spawn."

The Tsolum Ecology Centre leased from the DFO can be used as a base for this ongoing monitoring and preparation for the mine reclamation. Project Watershed is already contributing greatly towards a solution to the Mount Washington problem with their accent on Watershed Stewardship. As well, the Comox Valley

Chapter of the Steelhead Society through its Tsolum River Enhancement Committee; the Tsolum River Watershed Protection Society; and the Black Creek Ratepayers Association—all are making contributions and have a deep concern for this river.

Finally, a new Watershed Coordinating Assembly has been established. It has been handed the task of bringing about a solution to the degeneration of local watersheds. It seems to me that the Tsolum Watershed should be high on their list of priorities. The Assembly is not a new authority, but rather it calls for the cooperation of all parties whose goals are interdependent. By working together to solve a problem each party will gain more than it could by traditional bargaining techniques where a gain for one party is seen as a loss for the other.

We are on the eve of a new millennium. We are at the terminal phase of the cenozoic era, a geological period of 65 million years. The new era will be the ecozoic era, the age of the earth. We have brought about vast changes on a geological and biological order.

The four great components of the earth—the landsphere, the watersphere, the airsphere and the life-sphere, are being decisively and permanently altered in their composition and their functioning by the

more recent sphere, the mindsphere, you and me: altered, that is, in a deleterious, almost irreversible manner.

The ultimate custody of the earth belongs to the earth. The earth will solve its problems and possibly our own, if we will let the earth function in its own ways. We need only listen to what the earth is telling us. We are an autistic generation. We don't hear the voices. We fail to realize that the natural world is not a collection of objects to be exploited, but a community of subjects to be communed with. To enter into this communion experience means that we have to change, that we have to undergo a transformation of consciousness.

So with the Tsolum River. If only we had listened to the earth. We thought we knew best what was good for the river and for ourselves. But it is not too late. The river will never again be what it was intended to be. But without our new insights, and by working together as a community, we can allow the river to once again flow clean and sweet to the estuary and become the rightful home to those creatures whose home it rightfully is. □