

ENVIRONMENT

Time to turn over a greener leaf

Planning and motivation are the keys to sticking with New Year's resolutions to live more sustainably



STEVE CAREY
Reduce, Reuse, Rethink
rethink@tc.canwest.com

We're coming up on that time of year when we make our New Year's resolutions: we tell ourselves to go to the gym, take up a new sport, or to spend more time with our families. This year, let's resolve to take steps towards living sustainably.

A green New Year's resolution can be as simple as bringing reusable cloth bags to the store or regularly recycling things like foils, metals and soft plastics. Or it can be more complex, like undertaking green home renovations.

Gregor Craigie, host of CBC Radio's *On the Island*, had an environmental audit done on his 1927 home last year. The audit left Craigie and his wife Rebecca with a list of green renovation ideas. The couple turned that inventory of potential improvements into their list of resolutions.

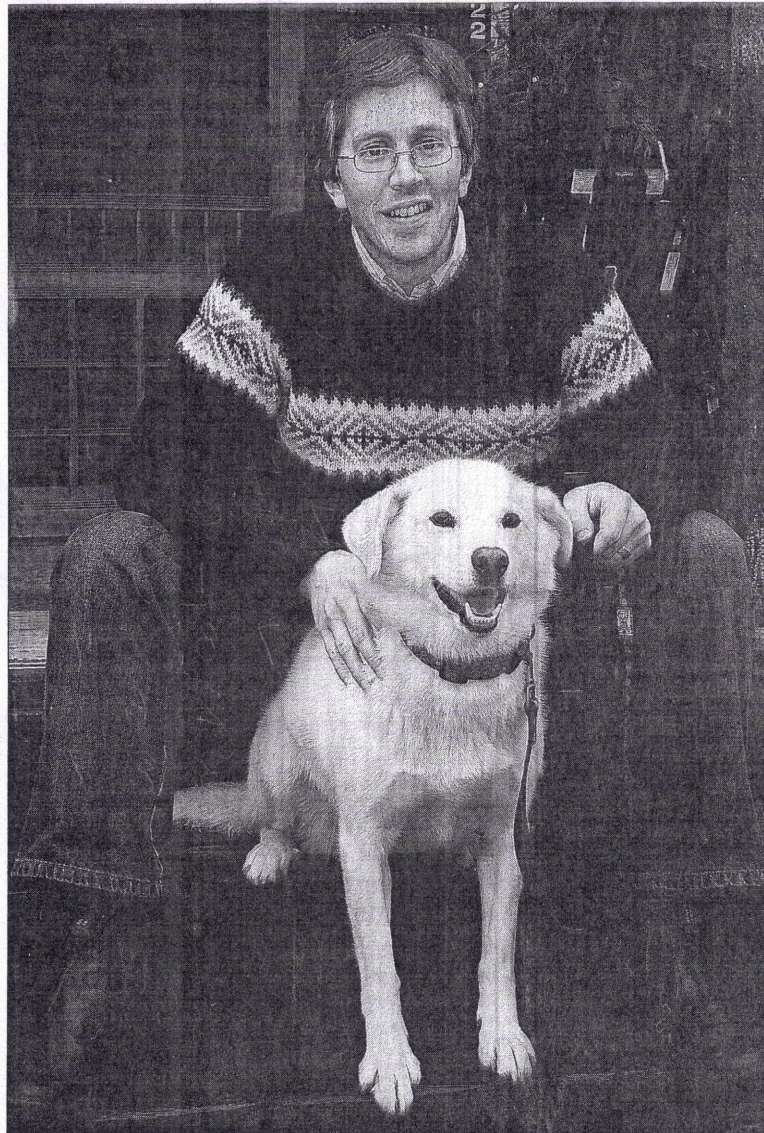
"When we first looked at the list of things to do, we thought, 'We can't afford to do all of these,'" Craigie says. He notes that the audit showed the house had almost no insulation. "But we've done almost everything on the list: Insulated the walls, insulated the attic, insulated the basement, put in a heat pump — that was a huge investment — and got all new windows."

In winter, it cost about \$200 a week in fuel to run their oil furnace. The family installed a heat pump and a backup electric heater for around \$11,000. Craigie says that it was worth it.

"Never mind the carbon footprint, the economic argument for it was really strong," Craigie says. "The savings are amazing. Our hydro bill is something like \$110 per month."

Most of us will aim for smaller resolutions, such as driving less or shopping at local farms. So how do we succeed at our resolutions?

If it's a physical activity, such as riding a bike or walking to work, it's related to the intention-behaviour gap, says Ryan Rhodes, a psychologist at the University of Victoria's Behav-



ADRIAN LAM, TIMES COLONIST

Instead of driving to the Dallas Road dog park, CBC Radio host Gregor Craigie has resolved to walk his dog, Nanuk, at the off-leash park closer to home.

People who fail in their resolutions often don't have concrete plans. They haven't taken the time to answer the when, where, why and how related to their goal. Those with more specific plans and intentions are more likely to succeed, Rhodes says. Those who don't think it through are likely to revert back to old habits.

Rhodes also says that people need to do things that are pleasing to them and problem-solve around things they don't mind doing, so they can perform the task.

It's about planning, enlisting others to keep you motivated and setting aside enough time to do the task, he says.

For example, if your resolution is to ride your bike

group of 500 individuals showed that adopters — people who took up a new active behaviour — were more likely to succeed if they used reminders and plans to get themselves motivated. Preparedness and reminders keep people on task, he says.

For non-physical resolutions, the same approach applies: Set a goal, make a plan and use reminders to help stay on track.

This week, I've assembled a list of resolution ideas and first steps, so you can get started on your own (See Ideas for Green Resolutions box, right). I've also talked to a few local personalities about their green New Year's resolution for 2010.

■ Gregor Craigie, CBC

particularly beef, is astounding. The second thing is kind of ironic: Maybe every second or third day we drive the car to walk the dog, as ridiculous as it sounds."

Craigie's dog, Nanuk, is half-husky, and needs to run, not walk, several times a day. Even though Craigie lives within walking distance of an off-leash park, he'll put the dog in the car and drive to the Dallas Road dog park or elsewhere.

"The first step in eating less meat is looking up more vegetarian recipes, and we've been doing that: Cooking a lot more and using lentils or beans as the primary protein source," he says.

"And on the dog front, it's a question of remembering it, and setting aside a lit-

IDEAS FOR GREEN RESOLUTIONS

■ **Buy from local farms.** Services such as Island Farm Fresh (IslandFarmFresh.com) list what's in season and the locations of farmers' markets. There's also Share Organics (ShareOrganics.bc.ca), which delivers organic island products to your home by bicycle.

■ **Drive less.** Walk or ride your bike to work. If you live too far away, check BCtransit.com for the nearest transit route and schedule information. Have rain gear ready to go to home. Keep an umbrella at work.

■ **Recycle more.** Don't just rely on the blue box. Set up a sorting station in your house and split up hard and soft plastics, tins, batteries, paper products and foil. Then go to CRD's recycling directory (crd.bc.ca/waste/recycle) to find where to take it. Compost, too.

■ **Briony Penn, geographer, author, and a founding director of The Land Conservancy**

"I think climate change, everyone has associated it with fossil fuels and what's coming out of their tailpipe, but in B.C. half of our emissions are from cutting down our trees to build our subdivisions," Penn says. "So what we do individually is a small percentage of what we're doing as a province."

For her 2010 resolution, Penn wants to raise awareness that as a province, we can lead the world by making better decisions with forestry and land use. In 2009, Penn purchased five acres of land on Saltspring Island and put covenants on the land to protect its old-growth forest from future development.

If landowners put a covenant on their land and save it, they are going to do more for their children and grandchildren, Penn says. "That's the big message coming out of Copenhagen, 'Save our carbon sinks. Save our forests.'"

■ **Ross Crockford, journalist and co-founder of Johnsonstreetbridge.org**

"I'm going to continue to push for the repair of the Johnson Street Bridge, instead of using thousands of tonnes of new steel and concrete on a new structure. After all, 'reduce' and 'reuse' are two of the R's of conservation," he says.

Johnsonstreetbridge.org has brought bridge engineers and historians to Victoria for public events, such as Frank Nelson, a Seattle bridge engineer, and Ed Wortman, an engineer who

■ **Bring cloth bags to the grocery store.** Or take it one step further by bringing reusable produce and bulk bags (www.hotsacks.ca). Put a few in your car or beside the door, so they're always handy.

■ **Pay attention to politics.** Sustainability starts at the local level. If you see something you don't like, resolve to get involved. If you see something you like, resolve to support it. For example, Saanich councillor Dean Murdock wants to see urban chickens allowed in Saanich.

■ **Buy less junk.** Our lives are overflowing with things that don't stand up to the wear and tear of everyday life. Resolve to buy less junk, and instead, look for products that will last for a useful life, then can be recycled or sold rather than junked.

"The challenge is to see if we can get all these signatures in crummy weather with Christmas going on, but certainly people are hot for the issue."

■ **Carole James, leader of the B.C. NDP, MLA for Victoria-Beacon Hill**

"Last year, we really took on a focus toward local foods, and tried to work hard on buying local produce," James says. "The year before, we took on transportation and bought a hybrid car; and I'm fortunate that I can walk to work ... so we've looked around for another piece to take on."

James says for 2010, she is planning a container garden for her deck, to continue the theme of eating local.

"We're just doing our planning right now; we're taking a look at what kind of space we have, what can be grown with the sun we get, so by the time spring rolls around, we'll have planned our boxes and we'll know what we can move ahead on," she says.

Composting at home is also something she wants to tackle. Although living in a townhome makes composting on-site difficult, James is examining several options.

"Being asked this question, it's really made me realize how much our society has shifted. I don't head to the grocery store without my cloth bags anymore. It's similar to recycling; I can't imagine putting a newspaper in the garbage," James says.

"It just shows you how much of a shift people have

such as taking a bike or walking to work, it's related to the intention-behaviour gap, says Ryan Rhodes, a psychologist at the University of Victoria's Behavioural Medicine Lab.

"When we're looking at New Year's resolutions, a lot of people have really good intentions to commute to work or things like that, and about half of them are going to fail, and quickly," Rhodes says.

existing ones to keep you motivated and setting aside enough time to do the task, he says.

For example, if your resolution is to ride your bike rather than drive your car, keeping your bike maintained, your rain gear ready to go, and ensuring you've got enough time to ride to work are good ways to make the task attainable, he says.

Rhodes's research on a

linked to a few other personalities about their green New Year's resolution for 2010.

■ **Gregor Craigie, CBC Radio host, On the Island**

"First of all, I should say I'm terrible at New Year's resolutions," Craigie says. "But I've been thinking about eating less meat — and if I do, eating local. The evidence you read about the carbon footprint of meat,

using lentils or beans as the primary protein source," he says.

"And on the dog front, it's a question of remembering it, and setting aside a little more time to walk her in the neighbourhood.

Inevitably, it means we have to spend more time walking her, to make sure we have a calm, satisfied dog that isn't walking up to us with the leash in her mouth."

has brought bridge engineers and historians to Victoria for public events, such as Frank Nelson, a Seattle bridge engineer, and Ed Wortman, an engineer who has overseen the restoration of some of Portland's movable bridges.

Crockford intends to keep searching for information to advance the argument of refurbishing and repairing the bridge.

similar to recycling, I can't imagine putting a newspaper in the garbage," James says.

"It just shows you how much of a shift people have made toward sustainability. I think it's exciting to see people thinking about how we can change our behaviour, because it's made a huge difference."

Read Steve Carey's blog at timescolonist.com/rethink.