

Public forum for West Kelowna Community Radio, March 26th



West Kelowna, B.C. - *The Westbank and District Community Radio Society* is inviting members of the Westside to attend a public forum to discuss the formation of a new Westbank-based radio station, to be held Friday, March 26th, 6 p.m. to 7 p.m., at the Board Room of Westbank United Church, 3672 Brown Road, Westbank, B.C. V4T 1P7.

Society President R.J. Smith says a Westbank-based community radio station is “an idea whose time has really come and is long overdue. I truly believe that the people of West Kelowna really deserve and want their own radio station !”

“So far, we have the enthusiastic support of Leah Thordarson, manager of the Westbank and District Chamber of Commerce, plus a number of long-time community volunteers,” says Smith. Our Society is still looking for a few more Westbankers to round out our board and very much welcomes input from the Westside community at this time.”

“ West Kelowna is currently the largest CRTC-eligible municipality in the Province of British Columbia that does not have its own radio station, which makes the reasons for a community station all the more compelling and important “

RJ Smith, President, W.D.C.R.S.

“No prior experience in broadcasting required, but it would be helpful if you cared about the Westside and would like to help make it a better place to live,” adding that seniors and retired people are most welcome to join us.” Radio is actually an exciting hobby for both the young and old.”

For the last 50 years of its existence, the Westside has relied exclusively on Kelowna-based media, primarily newspapers, commercial radio and CHBC-Television to keep informed on the news of the day. However, Smith feels that Westside residents deserve an alternative choice, in terms of media, which they can call their own and something that no other radio station can offer ?

“ Community radio stations don’t really compete with existing radio, but compliments them, by offering more choices and a wider diversity in programming that commercial radio does not offer, such as foreign language shows, jazz and blues, live local musical groups and artists, classical, big band, heavy metal, indie rock, (and other specialty music programming) that local radio “doesn’t want to play.”

The difference between commercial and community-based radio

In commercial radio, the emphasis is on the advertiser, and to generate as much money as possible. At a "not for profit" radio station, the focus is on the music being played and hence, the deejay or radio personality. This returns the medium of radio to its proper and original purpose of being a personality and content driven vehicle and addresses what many people say is currently lacking in today's commercial radio scene ? "

The proposed Westbank station will feature multi-ethnic shows in several languages, including Westbank First Nations programming. We also plan to be very serious about local sports coverage, including coverage of professional sports teams such as the Westside Warriors Junior A hockey club and the Kelowna Jays professional baseball team, who recently said they wanted to relocate to the Westside.

Also, minor football, high school sports, soccer, martial arts, and other groups not usually given much coverage by the local media.

" West Kelowna is currently the largest Canadian-Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) eligible municipality in the Province of British Columbia that does not have its own radio station, Which makes the reasons for a community radio station in West Kelowna all the more compelling and important. "

Smith admits that since West Kelowna is a vast, mountainous bedroom and farming community of close to 29,000, (37,000, including the WFN territories) the area will be physically challenging to cover and "frankly, the more media that we have to cover it, the better it will be for the residents of Westside and a better informed opinion they will be able to make of local news and events affecting the Westside."

Born in Montreal, Quebec, and a resident of the Okanagan for 15 years, RJ Smith is an Asian-Canadian broadcast journalist who speaks four languages and has worked for 11 radio stations across Canada, including four years of community/campus radio and television as a news director, assistant sports director, news and sports anchor/reporter, floor director, talk-show host and trainer of on-air talent.(CITR Vancouver CFUV Victoria, CKDU Halifax, Rogers Cablevision, Shaw TV, MacLean-Hunter Television, etc.).

As a former reporter and "on air" personality for four Okanagan radio stations, RJ Smith has covered Kelowna City Council, Vernon Council, Coldstream Council, NORD, and several local elections.

He's a graduate of Columbia Academy of Radio/Television and Pitman Business College who has also attended B.C.I.T.'s Broadcast Journalism Program and Camosun College's School of Criminal Justice.

For more information on volunteering in community radio, call (250) 448-8738 or visit: www.cfrj.ca.

For more information on this release, please contact: RJ Smith, President, Westbank and District Community Radio Society at (250) 448-8738. Or email: wcdcrs@shaw.ca