

An award recognizing outstanding dedication and commitment to the preservation of the environment was created in 2004, and re-named the [John Hind-Smith Memorial Award](#) in 2006 in his honour.

Following is the text of a speech delivered by George Smith in November 2006 honouring John Hind-Smith and establishing an Environmental Achievement Award in his name.

John Hind-Smith

I want to thank the Conservation Association for according me the privilege of honouring John Hind-Smith tonight.



One thing that Canadian society can learn from First Nations is their art of honouring elders. And if there ever was a spiritual elder for the conservation community (and other communities) on the Sunshine Coast, that elder was John Hind-Smith.

John passed away in April 2005 at Totem Lodge in Sechelt. He began his love affair with nature while growing up in his native Yorkshire. John was born in the little village of Wyke in 1921. He hiked and caved extensively in northern England and Scotland with his brother Lawrence. After fixing airplanes in Simla, India for the Royal Air Force during World War Two and spending a short time in Ontario, John turned up on the Sunshine Coast in 1960. He worked at the mill in Port Melon briefly then set up his "Dependable Refrigeration" business that lasted until he retired around 1985.

However, it was not work that motivated John; John's love was nature, the wilder the better. Shortly after arriving here he began spending much of his time hiking up onto Mount Elphinstone and beyond into the Tetrahedron alpine, often following creeks before the roads were built. Over the years he built up a deep knowledge of our local ecosystem and shared that wisdom freely with the many coast children and adults whom he led into the woods.

John developed a special love for the animals and plants of the coast. He spent many hours moulding his property into a magical fragrant garden where the smaller birds were attracted to the beauty and smells of the flowers that John had planted. He put in countless hours building and tending the small salmon hatchery on the creek on Arthur Clarke's place. He especially admired the larger birds - the eagles, ospreys, owls and Great Blue Herons, and did what he could to help conserve them and their habitat. Yet, John reserved his greatest affection for his two dog companions, Tippy and Gypsy.

John gave back to nature in his own uniquely humble, quiet and respectful - yet very firm way. Among many other contributions, he was a lifetime member of the Sunshine Coast Natural History Society (which was first called the Marsh Society). He was the director of conservation for the Gibsons Wildlife Club, a member of the Tetrahedron Ski Club and a supporter of the Sergeant Bay Society. John was a founding member of the Salmon Enhancement Society, the Elves Club, the Search and Rescue Group, and of course of the Tetrahedron Alliance.

The term Environmentalist came into being during the time when John was gently, privately and modestly being one. While speeches were being delivered on Earth Day, John would quietly spend his day picking up garbage in the community

Tony Greenfield, president of the Natural History Society, wrote that John "perhaps, should best be remembered for his early role in efforts to preserve the Tetrahedron as a natural area. John knew the Tetrahedron area from his personal explorations before it appeared on anyone else's radar screen, and he recognized its local and provincial significance. Eventually, the area was preserved as a provincial park, and John's inspirational efforts were enshrined in the naming of a sub-alpine lake (located directly beneath both Tetrahedron and Panther peaks), as John Hind-Smith Lake. This pristine mountain lake, visited by few, is truly a worthy memorial to a great man and in many ways it captures John's essential nature, for he preferred to work in low key ways, out of the headlines."

I must add that while the SCRD dedicated John Hind-Smith Lake in October 1994, lake names become official in BC only after the official gazetting process by the provincial government, which can begin only after the person is deceased. Some of John's friends and the SCRD have

initiated this process.

I should also add that it was during the struggle to protect the Tetrahedron that I became more aware of the "elder" side of John's nature. As the leaders of the Tetrahedron Alliance came under very personal attacks, John urged us to not respond in kind but to take the public high road and to respect the humanity of our opposition, no matter what. In fact, John was teaching us the basic principles of honourable interaction and grace.

In 1986, while he was riding his bicycle, a nasty accident nearly claimed John's life. He was then stricken with Parkinsons in the early 1990s. Irrepressible as ever, even in his later wheel chair years, John still took several ocean cruises, saw the Chilcoot Pass by rail and the Tatshenshini glaciers by helicopter. He even managed a last mountain visit in the Pemberton Valley as the sole passenger in a glider. John ended his days in Totem Lodge where the staff showed him a great deal of affection. Laureen Reid's nursing support allowed him to travel and his friend Dave Pinkney helped John in many ways during his final years. One of the lessons that John provided us was the dignity with which one can bare the pain and frustration that can accompany conditions as unfair as Parkinsons.

Despite his afflictions, John remained active. He practiced silent philanthropy for many charitable organizations, even after his death. For example, in his will he generously gave to the Children's Hospital, to St Mary's Hospital to improve health care services to elderly people, to the Sunshine Coast Bursary and Loan Society, to the Sunshine Coast Natural History Society and to the Search and Rescue Association.

Those of us lucky to count John as a friend enjoyed his very English sense of humour, which could be both gentle and wickedly black at the same time. However, it may be that John's most defining characteristic and one that enabled his enormous conservation contribution was his deep sense of grace towards all living beings. John was indeed a true elder who taught us much and left an inspirational legacy.

So, how to pay proper tribute to this wonderful man after he has gone? The directors of the Conservation Association have decided to recognize John posthumously this year for their Environmental Achievement Award. Further, in honour of John, they will henceforth call this annual award the John Hind-Smith Environmental Achievement Award.

Thank you,

George Smith
November 2006



Sign on the Mt. Elphinstone Tramway Trail, 2012.