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Thursday January 27, 2011

\$3.00 includes HST

## Positive signs, also changes, at Gwaii Trust

by Alex Rinfret

The Gwaii Trust Society made more money, spent more money and ended its latest financial year with a surplus, islanders heard at the organization's annual general meeting Saturday (Jan. 22) in Old Massett.

The Gwaii Trust has pretty much rebounded from the disastrous market collapse of 2008, auditor Michael Johnson of McAlpine and Co. said, and is now worth about \$68 million.

The trust fund made over \$4 million in investment income in the year ended Aug. 31, 2010, a huge improvement over the \$2.5 million it made in 2009.

"The trust is in good shape," Mr.

Johnson told directors and members of the public. "It has recovered a bit from the financial downturn."

The society approved \$1.2 million worth of grants over the 2009-2010 fiscal year, and also paid out money for projects approved in previous years. Administrative spending was up in 2010, with the society paying \$682,000 on rent, travel, wages, honoraria and other expenses. This compares to \$600,000 in 2009.

Also during 2010, the society set aside \$883,000 to protect its core fund from inflation. The society started off with \$38-million in 1994, and committed to inflation-proofing the core

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The big tides last week got islanders talking. Above, a house in Massett with a canoe poised for a quick getaway.

Archie Stocker Sr. photo.

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amount every year. The core fund now stands at almost \$53 million, Mr. Johnson said. This portion of the fund can never be spent, and is used to continue generating the investment income that allows the society to give out grants every year.

Gwaii Trust chair Peter Lantin, who has just finished his first year in that

ahead for the Gwaii Trust. The board has come up with two main priorities, youth and economic development, Mr. Lantin said. Over the next few months, the board will be unveiling new programs that will take effect in the 2011-2012 year.

Mr. Lantin said the trust's current programs - such as Legacy, Healthy Humans and Culture as it Relates to Tourism - have been in place since its

istrator Errol Winter, as well as more about the society's plans to focus on economic development. Directors want to use the Gwaii Trust to make a meaningful difference on the islands, he said, but are moving cautiously because economic development is a huge and complicated issue.

"We need to create an environment where the economy can flourish," he said. "It's a big departure from what



position, said the 2008 market crisis spurred the trust's directors to become much more knowledgeable about exactly how the fund makes money. The trust has always taken a conservative approach with its investments, and therefore didn't lose as much as it could have during the downturn, he said. But since then, the trust has been diversifying its investments and looking for opportunities that provide a guaranteed cash flow, like real estate.

"The world of the Gwaii Trust revolves around our ability to produce cash, to produce income, in order to allocate these earnings to the communities of Haida Gwaii," he said in a written message distributed at the meeting. "The board of directors should be commended for their accomplishments this year in this realm. It is something that is never seen, nor acknowledged, because the reality of Gwaii Trust is that most residents feel the impacts of the Gwaii Trust in terms of spending, or what the Trust is spending its earnings on."

Meanwhile, there are big changes

earliest days and it's time to replace some of them.

"The programs are losing their effectiveness," he said. "Are the needs changing on Haida Gwaii? The answer obviously is yes... I don't think the needs are the same as they were 10 years ago."

Mr. Lantin said islanders will definitely be consulted. The very popular travel and education funds, he said, will likely not be changed.

Directors are also exploring the possibility of setting up legal foundations under the Gwaii Trust umbrella, he said. A foundation could be focused on a particular concern, like youth or Rediscovery camps or food banks, and would allow people to make donations knowing that the money would be directed to that cause. Once a foundation was set up, it could generate a constant stream of income for its cause, freeing the Gwaii Trust to focus on other issues.

Islanders will be hearing more about this in the coming months, said admin-

we've done in the past."

Mr. Lantin wrapped up the meeting by urging islanders to talk to their directors about the Gwaii Trust, whether about a funding application or to share their opinions about the future direction of the trust. "You'd be alarmed at how little that happens," he said. "Call your director."

Several directors were appointed at the meeting. Mr. Lantin thanked outgoing director Cynthia Samuels for her four years on the board; and also recognized Warren Foster for his many years of service. Mr. Foster was part of the group that formed the Gwaii Trust back in the early 1990s, and has represented Sandspit for several terms since then. He will be staying on as an alternate. The society's eight directors are: John T. Jones, Percy Crosby, James Cowpar and Trevor Russ, all of the Council of the Haida Nation; Kim Mushynsky (Graham Island North), Jim Abbott (Graham Island Central), Shelley Sansome (Graham Island South) and Kristi Schmitz (Sandspit).