

Do It Green: Take fun and practical steps

Do It Green (DIG) has turned its “love for greening festivals” into a thriving Alberta business. The social enterprise empowers people to “take fun and practical steps” to do their part to contribute to the health of the community.

DIG officially launched in August 2013, in part to help manage the waste at the Alberta Flood Aid benefit concert at McMahon Stadium in Calgary. The organization specializes in creating zero-waste events and it offers a wide range of environmental programming, including composting and recycling programs as well as mobile water stations.

“Last year, we greened over 50 special events including Calgary Stampede, Comic Expo and Calgary Marathon,” says Leor Rotchild, President and Co-founder of DIG. “We reached more than two million people with our environmental outreach programs and diverted more than 10 metric tons away from the landfill.”

DIG is just getting started. The organization is committed to delivering on its mission is to reach 16 million people through waste, water and energy awareness programs and divert 100 metric tons of waste away from the landfill by 2020.

Being a finalist for the Emerald Awards “is the first time DIG’s work has been recognized outside of Calgary. For us, this is an encouraging boost to keep us progressing towards our mission.”

The Emerald Awards and other events that celebrate environmental achievements are “a great way for leaders in this area to meet and learn about other best practices in the field,”



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he says. “The environmental sector has grown to become a major contributor to the economy as well as the health of our communities.”

Speaking of community, DIG has a lot of opportunities for people in the community to pitch in and help them out as they take their

zero-waste work to events such as the Calgary Marathon, Food Truck Frenzy, and World Partnership Walk.

DIG has partnered with the Centre for Affordable Water and Sanitation Technology (CAWST) and will donate one per cent of all

its gross revenue to the innovative non-profit water organization.

“It’s a great honour to be a finalist for the Emerald Awards and be recognized among many others we respect and look up to in the environmental sector,” says Rotchild.

Improving ecologies in your community

Verge Permaculture educating thousands

For seven years, Verge Permaculture has been helping people across Canada regenerate landscapes, build topsoil and improve ecologies in their communities.

Through their accredited Permaculture Design Courses, the company has helped educate thousands of people across the country, teaching the basics of permaculture — a system for designing everything from a backyard to a business. A permaculture design framework provides the concepts, tools, techniques and strategies to create sustainable human environments, covering shelter, energy, waste, water and food production.

The term dates back to the 1970s when Australian researchers working in agriculture coined the term permaculture to mean “permanent agriculture.” They soon realized social aspects were also integral to a sustainable system so they expanded the meaning of the term to include “permanent culture.”

But several decades later, when Rob and

Michelle Avis left their jobs as oil and gas engineers with a vision of providing real-world solutions to create more sustainable homes, resilient communities and a healthy ecosystem, the term still wasn’t well known.

“The idea of permaculture just didn’t exist in Alberta,” says Rob Avis, president of Verge Permaculture. “But now it’s not uncommon for me to see things like RFPs with the word permaculture on it, so the city of Calgary is actively trying to seek consultants and landscape architects and individuals that can help bring that kind of thinking into the way that we design our cities.”

In their garden and demonstration site for applied sustainability techniques, the Avis’ reuse about 20,000 litres of rainwater every year. And they help their clients develop sustainable designs for homes, yards, businesses, communities, rural homestead or farms.

Verge Permaculture collects and examines different metrics to determine the effect the



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company is having. They look at how their students are using the information and what businesses have started or changed to employ the permaculture framework.

“When we heard that we were nominated

for an Emerald Award that was another of those little metrics, it was like the cherry on the cake,” says Avis. “I was really excited. And it’s really given us additional motivation to continue pioneering in the field.”