

## Adventures in sailing

Local tour operator offers world-class tours of B.C. coast.



**COASTAL ADVENTURES -** Last year, Bluewater Adventures' Queen Charlotte Islands tour was named as one of the world's 50 best excursions by National Geographic Traveler.

*Submitted photos*

### North Shore realtor to chair B.C. council

West Van realtor Judi Whyte has been elected to chair the Real Estate Council of B.C. for the 2008/09 term.

Whyte, a realtor with 25 years experience, works with Prudential Sussex Realty and was elected to the position on Tuesday. She served as vice-chair last year and replaces outgoing chair Satnam Sidhu of Re/Max Crest Realty in North Vancouver.

Bill Binnie of Royal LePage North Shore in West Vancouver was also elected to the council for a two-year term.

The Real Estate Council of B.C. is the regulatory agency responsible for licensing individuals involved in real estate sales, rental and strata property management.

### SCOTT NEUFELD STAFF REPORTER

In more than three decades of operation North Vancouver-based Bluewater Adventures has achieved some of the highest international accolades for its eco-tours.

Last year, the company's Queen Charlotte Islands tour was named as one of the world's 50 best excursions by National Geographic Traveler, but these days they'll settle for being the most popular local tour company.

"The U.S. is definitely our biggest (market) but we're really trying to get the local market," said Leanne Carey of Bluewater Adventures. "I think it's a huge opportunity (for locals) – a lot of people have to fly into Vancouver and then to Sandspit."

As their name hints, Bluewater tours ply the ocean bringing small groups of adventurers to some of B.C.'s most remote coastlines. Among the destinations: the Queen Charlotte Islands, the Great Bear Rainforest and the Gulf Islands.

But what sets Bluewater tours apart is their focus on education.

Since the 1980s, the tour company has forged strong links with the Haida and other north coast first nations, enabling them to give visitors a profound glimpse into aboriginal culture.

Included in the adventure is an authentic Haida feast and a trip to the new Haida Cultural Centre at Skidegate.

"Each of our tours has a focus on wildlife and native cultures," said Carey. "You definitely go to places few people get to go."

The highlight of the tour, and what earned praise from National



Geographic Traveler, is a visit to the ancient village of Ninistints, which boasts the largest collection of totem poles still in their natural setting.

However, Bluewater tours focus on more than just culture. Guides also lead travellers to witness B.C.'s natural splendour including grizzlies, whales, birds and some of the province's most elusive creatures.

"We go on tours to look for the kermode bear. The wildlife in that area is just amazing," Carey said. "They're really just amazing tours."

Bluewater Adventures offer more active options to other tours. Adventurers go on hikes and kayaking tours to get up close to wildlife. But Carey said the trips aren't too strenuous.

"Some (travellers) aren't that physically fit but they can still do the tours," she said. "As long as you can climb in

and out of a boat you will be fine."

Most tour-goers are aged 50 and up but Carey said she is seeing more young people embarking on Bluewater tours.

Eco-friendly tourism may be in vogue in B.C. but Bluewater was born with an environmental ethic in the mid-1970s.

To limit their environmental impact tours are limited to about 15 people. The company recently undertook a carbon audit to find ways to further limit the environmental impression left by their tours.

"We're very eco-friendly; we travel at low speeds to save on fuel mileage," Carey said. "We try to encourage other operators to do the same."

Bluewater Adventures operates tours to the Queen Charlotte Islands, Southeast Alaska, Great Bear Rainforest, north Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. Prices range from about \$1,575 for a five-day Gulf Island tour to more than \$5,000 for an 11-day Alaska tour. For more information or to charter your own ideal tour visit [www.bluewateradventures.ca](http://www.bluewateradventures.ca).