

# Star light, star bright: how to preserve the night sky

By ALLYSON SNELLING

Township of Muskoka Lakes Mayor Alice Murphy has committed to put the issue of dark sky friendly lighting on the township council agenda.

The request was made during the Muskoka Ratepayers Association (MRA) annual general meet-



ing on July 16 at Port Carling Community Centre.

Dark skies advocate and MRA director Mike Silver asked the mayor to commit to enacting a dark skies bylaw, similar to the one that the Town of Gravenhurst will consider, before the end of the calendar year.

"I haven't seen the bylaw, so I can't commit to do that, but I will bring it on to an agenda for council dialogue," Murphy responded.

The timely request followed a presentation on preserving the night sky by James Solecki of Port Sydney-based Integra Works, an exterior lighting design company.

His presentation was intended to help local ratepayers understand the importance of maintaining a healthy, dark nighttime environment.

Solecki said there is a general lack of awareness, acknowledgement and understanding of how light invading the dark sky can be detrimental to health and the environment.

"We're learning (through studies) about how artificial light affects plant, animal and human health," he said, adding the mating habits of different wildlife species, bird populations and tur-

tle hatchings are all affected.

He said wasteful lighting practices, where light is directed away from where it is intended, create light pollution and "sky glow," the halo of light that hangs over towns and cities.

"If we can reduce light pollution, we can reduce sky glow," he said.

To preserve the night sky, Solecki said there are a number of factors to consider.

Over-illumination is one factor, which he called a byproduct of poor planning.

"There is a misguided notion that brighter is better," he said.

Light trespass is another factor, when light is unwittingly shone on another property or spills beyond where intended, perhaps through inadequate shielding or a bad light fixture.

Glare is also a factor that causes nuisance and discomfort, Solecki said.

There is also the problem of "uplighting" billboards and other signs, he added.

He quantified the financial side of over-lighting, noting \$1.5 billion is wasted on lighting the sky in the United States.

"Can you imagine what that means for carbon dioxide and

greenhouse gas?" Solecki said.

As private property owners, ratepayers can take matters into their own hands by taking more responsibility for their own lighting practices.

He encouraged the group to assess their properties for the location and type of fixtures and bulbs.

"Look at your property from your neighbour's perspective and from the water by boat," he said.

There are simple fixes in replacing 60-watt bulbs with 15- or 25-watt bulbs, and aiming lights downward, said Solecki.

There is also a variety of full cut-off or dark sky friendly light fixtures on the market.



ARTISTIC EXPRESSION. Emiliano Vargas Lopez, right, and Naomi Assenheim of Opal Wing Creations displayed their artistic wares at the Muskoka Arts and Crafts Summer Show on Sunday.

Photo by Jon Spratt

COTTAGE NIGHT LIFE. James Solecki of Port Sydney-based Integra Works, encourages dark sky preservation during the Muskoka Ratepayers Association's annual general meeting on July 16 in Port Carling.

Photo by Allyson Snelling



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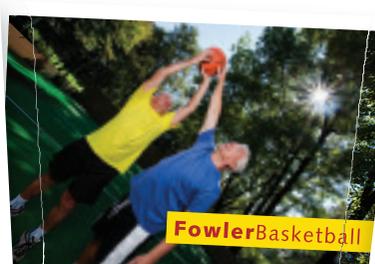
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