

Jumbo babel

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There is no limit, it seems, to the shrinking qualities of our conversation skills. Longhand letters have shrunk down to email size. The email has been chopped to fit neatly into the 126 characters of a text message. And with twitter, our correspondence with each other is reduced to one liners, often in the form of strings of LOLs and OMGs.

It's no wonder that a conversation (some might say an argument) that has lasted the better part of 20 years has become difficult to follow by today's standard.

Norm Macdonald says the issue of Jumbo has to do with local government taking responsibility for its land use decisions. Potential developer of the pass, Grant Costello, says that land use is a matter that was taken up years ago and what is needed now is the planning procedure to be sent to the province.

David Wilks, says it is all a matter of resources. Wilks, the man immediately responsible for kicking up the latest dust cloud on this issue, by drafting a proposal he plans to give to the regional district that would, for the second time, make a request to the province to take over planning, just thinks the work and the risk involved is too big for the district to tackle. Of course, opponents like Bob Campsall argue that the motivation behind it all is money, a "land grab" that would leave the Jumbo Glacier irrevocably damaged by human traffic.

The confusion from two decades of this has led to two things. One is that opinions have polarized around a single catch phrase of "save Jumbo" or "build Jumbo" leaving out the tangle of political history behind both arguments. The other side is the natural complacency and apathy of the public when a problem gets just too convoluted to spend a sunny summer day fretting over. Either way, the battle only comes to a more fervent boil and both public discourse, as well as the discourse between the players most closely involved, gets stifled and ignored. Unfortunately, this is where the solution, if any, will lie.

As you exit, as Kent Kebe from Radium's Visitor Centre calls it, the "crack in the wall" from the park into the valley, a sign welcomes you. It is a passage from a psalm but may as well be seen as an early form of social networking chatter, a "tweet" before its time. It reads "And the mountains shall bring peace to the people." Perhaps it is about time the people got together and returned the favour.

- Dave Lazzarino