



Safeguarding the Seal River

By Josh Pearlman, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society

THE LARGEST REMAINING undammed river in northern Manitoba, the wild, unspoiled essence of the Seal and the lands that feed it hold a mythic quality in the hearts and minds of those aware of its natural richness.

Despite occupying roughly 12 percent of our province's landmass, distance and inaccessibility (the watershed lies 1,000 km north of Winnipeg) has kept it off most radars and left it undamaged by human hands over the span of recorded history. With unmatched diversity of natural features and relatively little imminent pressure of industrial development, the watershed holds a very real and rare opportunity for First Nations and the provincial government to work toward land use planning and protection of this remarkable intact natural region.

The Seal's path spans 260 km from its source at Shethanei Lake to Hudson Bay, yet it is over 150 km from the coast that the waters are first populated by eager and somewhat unexpected ambassadors of the ocean: harbour seals. Here, the river's namesake animal may stray further from its marine environment than anywhere else on earth.

Carving a path east through untainted subarctic forest, the river's surrounding landscape plays host to black bear, wolf, fox and wolverine, as well as moose, beaver, otter, eagle, osprey and boreal songbirds. Swooping from rocky heights along the river's edge, cliff swallows nest here at the northern limit of their range.

The scents of spruce and lichen mingle as the landscape transitions to tundra (where the long

Inside this Issue:

Safeguarding the Seal River....cover,	4
Executive Director's Letter	2
Eco-Events in Manitoba.....	3
A Fresh Approach.....	5
Sustainable Pastures	6-7
Lower Speeds Make Safer & Healthier Neighbourhoods.....	8
BOOK REVIEW: Plato's Revenge.....	9
Canada Disappoints at UN Climate Talks	11

extirpated grizzly bear is making a provincial return) and to the peat rich soils of the Hudson Bay Lowlands (North America's largest wetland) where provincially rare plant species abound.

The 400,000 animals of the Qaminuriak Caribou Herd are a crucial presence on the physical and cultural landscape. These majestic creatures travel south from Nunavut to winter near the Seal River. Traditionally hunted by

continued on page 4 >>

Winding across 260 km of unspoiled wilderness, the Seal River is northern Manitoba's largest free-flowing major river. For now, the Qaminuriak Caribou Herd rules this landscape, which is at this point free from the marks of industrial resource extraction.



PHOTO: JOSH PEARLMAN, CANADIAN PARKS AND WILDERNESS SOCIETY

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Executive Director's Letter

Invest in youth and invest in the future

HAVE YOU HEARD THE TERM "nature deficit disorder?" Richard Louv's hypothesis is that human beings — especially children — are spending less time outdoors, resulting in a wide range of behavioural problems. I am reading a book called *Your Brain on Nature – The Science of Nature's Influence on Your Health, Happiness and Vitality*. This book explains that as we interact with nature, we reap the benefits of improved mental health while increasing our empathy and attraction to nature, which leads to greater efforts to protect the natural world. A strong connection with nature is mutually beneficial for both humans and the Earth.

It is critical that we rekindle the bond of children with nature, not only for the health benefits, but also for the influence it will have on how they interact with nature as adults. Will the interaction be one of destruction or preservation? Baba Dioum, an environmentalist from Senegal, said:

"For in the end, we will save only what we love, we will love only what we understand, and we will understand only what we are taught."

In 2007, Manitoba Eco-Network created the Manitoba Environmental Youth Network to help build a capable and connected community of youth in Manitoba who are making a positive difference for the environment. Over the years, the Youth Network has enabled youth to meet and learn from one another, share ideas, plan joint projects, find out about resources available to them and collectively build their capacity for taking action.

We are reaching out to request your financial support so that Manitoba Eco-Network can continue its work in environmental education and community building. Monthly donations are the best way to support our work, but single contributions are also more than welcome. From \$10,000 to \$1, every amount helps. Donations above \$10 are eligible for a tax receipt. This year, we offer you the additional opportunity to help facilitate the Youth Network's mission by purchasing a Manitoba Eco-Network membership for a youth aged 18 or younger for half the cost (\$15.00). Help connect a loved one to Manitoba's only environmental network.

Payment options can be found by visiting mbeconetwork.org/support-our-work/donate. To sign up a youth, please click on "Individual Membership Form" on the left of the page.

We thank you deeply for your support. It is more important now than ever before. 🌱

Kristine Koster
Executive Director, Manitoba Eco-Network



PHOTO: DYLAN HEWLETT

OF SPECIAL NOTE

Join Manitoba Eco-Network for two major upcoming events! Group and Associate Members are invited to our Member Forum on January 30th. Details are in the Events section on page three. Non-profits and for-profits interested in joining our network can apply at www.mbeconetwork.org.

Exciting changes are coming to the Reel Green Film Festival for 2013. We are looking at Friday, April 19, just before Earth Day, as a likely date. We look forward to welcoming friends of the Eco-Network to watch important films and observe the Anne Lindsey Protecting Our Earth Awards. Stay tuned for more details!

COURTESY OF CHURCHILL NORTHERN STUDIES CENTRE



The Churchill Northern Studies Centre is presenting two programs in February & March.

January

17 An Invitation to Simplicity – A Presentation by Mark Burch

“Invitation to Simplicity” introduces voluntary simplicity as a powerful, creative lifestyle choice that can help us meet the challenges of the future. 7:00 p.m. at Riverview Community Centre (90 Oakland Ave). For more information, contact Matthew Sanscartier at sso.ccs@gmail.com or visit sustainableouthosborne.com

21 Manitoba’s Enchanted Isles – Exploring the Remote Islands of Lake Winnipeg’s North Basin

Join Dr. Randall Mooi on a tour of the North Basin as he introduces the what, where, when and how of the animals living on these incredible islands, and gives us a taste of the adventure in exploring them. 340 Provencher Boulevard at 7:30 p.m. naturemanitoba.ca

30 Manitoba Eco-Network Member Forum

Group and Associate Members, please join Manitoba Eco-Network on January 30th for media training, networking, and to provide feedback on the services we offer you. 9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Dalnavert Museum, 61 Carlton Street. For more information, contact Sean Goertzen at info@mbeconetwork.org.

February

1 Green Drinks

An informal monthly get-together of individuals working for the environment: in government, consulting, non-profits and in spare time. Make new friends, reconnect with old acquaintances, and unwind at the end of your week. King’s Head Pub, 5:00 p.m. ‘til whenever. Organized by Manitoba Eco-Network.

3 Maple Leaf Survival Course

Learn winter shelter building, water sourcing and treatment, fire starting and other important cold weather survival techniques. 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at FortWhyte Alive. \$60 per person or \$100 for two. To register, call 204.989.8355 or email info@fortwhyte.org. Visit fortwhyte.org for many more events.

7 Sustainable Futures 2013

This environmental career fair connects today’s students with tomorrow’s opportunities, with more than 43 employers and 16 breakout sessions planned. For more information, contact Deborah at dtardiff@meia.mb.ca or 204-783-7090. Organized by the Student Chapter of the Manitoba Environmental Industries Association.

7-12 (& Feb. 28 – March 5) Winter Skies: Aurora and Astronomy in Churchill

Marvel at the spectacular aurora borealis by night at the Churchill Northern Studies Centre. Also: tours of Churchill, cultural presentations and an afternoon of dog sledding. Join instructor Roger “Starman” Woloshyn and get a taste of life in the sub-arctic during a peak year in the current solar cycle. \$1,045. Churchillscience.ca.

16-18 Mantario Cabin Ski Trip

Spend the February long weekend on a ski trip to the beautiful Mantario cabin in Whiteshell Provincial Park. Participants must have the endurance and skills to cross-country ski over 20 km each way in very cold weather. Contact Katrina Froese at katrina_froese@yahoo.ca or 204-453-8216.

March

1-2 Growing Local Conference

Join Food Matters Manitoba for two days of networking and education on food security. Learn more and register at foodmattersmanitoba.ca.

14-19 North of 58°: Winter Ecology and Northern Culture

Join instructor Michael Goodyear of the Churchill Northern Studies Centre and rethink the popular misconception that only the largest and hardiest of animals can withstand the brutal sub-arctic winter. Explore an amazing environment where grey jays lay their eggs at 40 degrees below zero and wood frogs freeze solid, only to thaw again with the coming of spring. Dig beneath the snow for signs of a secret world where lemmings scurry along vast tunnel systems and shrews weighing less than a dime forage for insects. Course participants will build two traditional snow dwellings (igloo and quinzhee) with guidance from skilled locals. A traditional dog sled ride through the forest, snow sampling with a CNSC researcher, and a snowmobile ride onto the sea ice of Hudson Bay round out this truly unique experience. At the end of the day, a hot meal, a warm bed and the glow of the northern lights await. \$1,065. Churchillscience.ca.

Please email your event notices to info@mbeconetwork.org.



Seal River cont'd...



Richard, St. Norbert Farmers' Market
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Inuit and Dene communities of Nunavut and northern Manitoba, these animals are an irreplaceable resource and a spectacular representation of Canada's wild landscape that we cannot afford to compromise.

Where the river meets the coast, a designated Important Bird Area sees significant numbers of Black Scoter in the summertime. Additionally, 3,000 beluga whales, part of the planet's highest concentration, gather to give birth in the estuary. A few short months later polar bears congregate in anticipation of sea ice formation.

It is the pristine quality of the Seal River's natural characteristics and tremendous recreational value that earned its designation as a Canadian Heritage River in 1992. This honour acknowledges the Seal's significance and unique assets, but does not offer any legislated or other protection.

For now, human presence, both industrial and otherwise, is relatively min-

“ The 400,000 animals of the Qaminuriak Caribou Herd are a crucial presence on the physical and cultural landscape. ”

imal in this road-less wilderness. The river itself sees use by small numbers of traditional hunters and trappers, as well as a handful of adventure-seeking paddlers. Mineral exploration occurs, but has thus far not translated into active mining claims. Like water from a duck's back, the Seal region has thwarted periodic development interests in part by virtue of its remote location and the extremity of its climate. That said, the untapped power of the river itself, the mineral potential of a prominent greenstone belt, and a proposed highway linking Manitoba to mainland Nunavut are looming pressures that may well touch down in the Seal region in the future.

In an effort to preserve the wildness and integrity of Manitoba's greatest undammed northern river, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society would gladly welcome the provincial government making the region encompassing the Seal River a priority area for the Manitoba Protected Areas Initiative. Through a process in full consultation with local First Nations, we can ensure for future generations the persistence of a natural realm whose wild and incomparable character cannot be replicated or replaced.



A FRESH Approach

Local stories and videos set to inspire

By Susan Lindsay, Project Manager, Climate Change Connection

HAVE YOU READ a feel good story lately? A story that makes you smile, or makes you laugh. A story you want to tell a friend. Or possibly a story that inspires you to do more or be more. Hmm...imagine a story so powerful it causes you to change. The truth is, stories *can* be powerful enough to create change.

For instance, what if I told you there was a 14-year-old boy in Africa, William Kamkwamba, that had to drop out of school because of a famine in his village, but rather than accepting his fate he decided to do something remarkable. Instead of just dreaming about a community with electricity, clean water and the ability to get an education, he made it happen. By using an American book he had found in his local school, another book to translate the first book, and tools he made out of scrap metal, William built his own wind turbine. With only scraps from a local junkyard in his village, he created something that harnessed the wind and changed the lives of his community. William built three windmills that produce enough electricity to provide indoor and outdoor lighting, and to pump water.

The pumped water irrigates his family's crops, reducing the chance of famine and his fellow villagers' tendency to drop out of school because of hunger. William's dream and ingenuity has changed the lives of his family and his village. He said, "building the windmill was easy."

William is now 22-years-old, famous, and studying at MIT. I heard about William's story from Al Gore. It is a story I will never forget and



“ I now think of William when I am confronted with an obstacle that may require more time or effort than expected. ”

I will pass on to others. I now think of William when I am confronted with an obstacle that may require more time or effort than expected.

Do we have local stories like this? Yes. We may not have as many obstacles as William, but there are definitely many great stories of change in Manitoba. Climate Change Connection has set out to tell you as many of them as we can. We are calling them FRESH stories: Focus on Real Environmental Stories from Here. To read some

of the FRESH stories we have written visit our website at <http://www.climatechangeconnection.org/Resources/FRESHstories.htm>.

We have also created three FRESH story videos. A volunteer, Hillary Beattie, created them. Thanks to Hillary these stories will enter homes and hopefully be passed on from one computer to the next. The first FRESH video is about Dennis, Hillary's dad, who makes biodiesel in his garage. The second video is about a school that is changing the way their students think through food. The Sisler Green Thumbs are gardening, composting, and hosting a fall supper that is local and organic. The last story is about the W.R.E.N.C.H.: a community bike shop that is fixing bikes and changing the community.

To view our videos visit Manitoba Eco-Network's YouTube channel — yes, MEN has a YouTube channel with many great videos — or visit our website at <http://www.climatechangeconnection.org/Resources/Freshvideos.htm> and be inspired.

If you know of a FRESH story please tell us about it!



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Sustainable Pastures

Perennial polycultures and Managed Intensive Rotational Grazing

By Lydia Carpenter



PHOTO: LYDIA CARPENTER

Sheep can be pastured outdoors year-round, seen here bale grazing in the winter.

PERMANENT PASTURE STANDS can be maintained by use of perennial polycultures that imitate the diversity of natural ecosystems. A diverse grouping of plants consisting of grasses, forbs, and woody species can make up a perennial polyculture and be used as pasture for grazing animals (ruminants), including cattle, sheep and goats. Animals on a perennial polyculture can contribute to nutrient cycling and an increase in soil organic matter. Established, maintained and healthy perennial pastures have also been shown to have a large capacity for carbon sequestration.

On our farm in Western Manitoba, we have counted over 30 different species of both native and non-native perennials and biennial forages, including nitrogen-fixing legumes such as alfalfa, pea-vine and various species of clover. These plants populate our permanent pasture that maintains a flock of sheep, a herd of goats and seasonal production of pasture-raised poultry. We employ a Managed Intensive Rotational Grazing (MIRG)

system that calls for short periods of grazing or “disturbance” followed by a recovery period.

In our MIRG system the sheep and goats graze together, with the goats preferring to eat more browse (such as twigs and shoots), and the sheep showing preference for forbs and grass. For the sheep and goats, portable electric fencing is used to create pasture paddocks. The goats and sheep are moved every few days and are followed by the chickens. The chickens are moved daily in portable pasture poultry pens.

It is not enough to move animals from one pasture to another. Stocking rates (number of animals per unit of land as a function of density and time) and rest periods are critical in managing animal nutrition, plant re-growth, nutrient distribution, and interruption of pathogen life-cycles. Studies have demonstrated that at both the plant and community levels, primary production increases for grazed vegetation above ungrazed vegetation where an optimal stocking rate is fol-

lowed by a rest period. Moreover, periodic cessation of grazing, especially during periods of rapid growth, will enhance both shoot and root growth by promoting the recovery and maintenance of greater leaf area. In this type of grazing system both plant biomass, and livestock manure and urine, lead to increased soil organic matter and a potentially more complex soil food web.

Management goals and local ecological constraints determine the success of any MIRG system. Many MIRG practitioners aim to integrate farming with the local ecology and increase plant biomass and soil organic matter. In addition, others may aim to raise healthy, grass-finished animals without the use of growth hormones or antibiotics. While the principles of MIRG may be universal, climate, soil, and local ecology inform varying management practices. As we seek to orientate food production into more resilient systems, it is important that we seek out traditional and local knowledge and contribute to a sense of place.

Resources:

- > Holistic Management International
www.holisticmanagement.org
- > Stockmand Grass Farmer
www.stockmangrassfarmer.com
- > *Meat: A Benign Extravagance* by Simon Fairlie
- > *The Omnivores Dilemma* by Michael Pollan
- > *Pasture Perfect* by Jo Robinson
- > *Pastured Poultry Profits* by Joel Salatin
- > *Grass Farming* by Andre Voisin



PHOTO: LYDIA CARPENTER

Pasturing chickens can occur in poultry pens.

**Nutrient Cycling:
Filling the gaps and closing the loop**

Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium (N, P and K) are some necessary elements for healthy productive plants, from market gardens and pasture, to canola and soy. In agriculture, nutrients are acquired and applied on the land in several ways. N, P and K are derived from mining fossil fuels (oil sands and potash mines), green manure crops on cultivated fields and manure/humanure (animal feedlots and municipal waste).

In some MIRG systems animals are kept out on the land year round to distribute their nutrients in a rotational system. It is important to note that MIRG can be done in the winter months with the use of techniques like bale grazing, swath grazing and mechanized winter-feeding on pasture. Not only does this mean the animals may live outdoors and outside of confinement but this strategy also allows for decreased overhead costs for both N,P and K, and the machinery and fuel needing for

“Animals on a perennial polyculture can contribute to nutrient cycling and an increase in soil organic matter.”

application. In a rotational grazing system much of the needed N, P and K are added or recycled to pasture via the manure and urine of livestock.

Making a livelihood from small-scale pasture-farming

New entrants to farming may have difficulty with start-up costs, cash flow and land tenure. The management practice of rotational grazing, while labour intensive, requires very few external inputs and low capital investments in infrastructure compared to more “conventional” forms of agriculture. In an agricultural era dominated by annual monocropping, land that is made up of perennial

polycultures is often less expensive than cultivated land. Furthermore, MIRG can be done as part of a larger strategy that seeks not only to raise healthy livestock and create healthy pastures and soils, but to reduce the use of fossil fuel inputs, food miles, antibiotics, growth hormones, GMOs, grain feeds etc. MIRG systems combined with direct farm marketing of grass-based livestock are one way for new entrants to find their feet in farming.

Our farming is fuelled by an interest in community, ecosystem dynamics, material and nutrient (re)cycling and renewable energy. MIRG allows us to look at ecological systems and see ourselves in them, not outside of them. As part of our own ecology we must learn how to navigate the dichotomies of life and death. Our agriculture is informed by a privileged environmental ethic that has brought us closer to both.

Lydia Carpenter and her partner Wian Prinsloo run Luna Field Farm, a pasture-based farm 20 miles south of Brandon.



Lower Speeds Make Safer & Healthier Neighbourhoods

City considering lowering speed limits in residential areas to 40 kph — why not 30?

By Charles Feaver, Provincial Committee Director, Bike to the Future

BIKE TO THE FUTURE recommends that the default speed limit on all residential streets in Winnipeg be 30 kilometres per hour (kph).

We commend City Council for considering dropping the speed to 40 kph, but it would be a shame to implement this half-measure, when there is a movement in the developed world to reduce residential speed limits to 30 kph.

- Thirty kph speed limits are a key component of sustainable travel policies in Denmark, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. In the UK, there is a popular movement promoting “20 is plenty” (meaning 20 miles per hour) www.20splentyforuk.org.uk

speed limits to 30 km/hr on residential streets and adopting a city-wide speed limit of 40 km/hr on all other streets, unless otherwise posted.”

Reduced speeds benefits city residents in many ways:

- Fewer injured car users. There were 22% fewer casualties in Portsmouth after two years of wide area 20 mph limits: 23% fewer among drivers and 31% fewer among passengers. Elderly drivers had 50% fewer injuries.
- Lower costs. As crashes fall in severity and frequency, so do settlements and repair bills. This lowers insurance premiums.



PHOTO: CHARLES FEAVER

Snowy streets could be safer with lower speed limits, says Bike to the Future.

- Less parents’ taxi duty. Safer roads allow children to travel more independently, freeing up their parents’ busy schedules
- More cycling. A Bristol City Council study showed that slowing speed limits from 30 mph to 20 mph contributed to increasing cycling and walking by up to 12% and reduced traffic. This added to the safety effect of the lower speed, because with more cyclists and walkers, drivers become more conscious of these road users.
- Better health. There is a direct relationship between the walkability/bikeability of a community and its health. Rates of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and many other ailments are higher in communities where people spend more time travelling by motor vehicle, and less time getting around on their own power.

Lower speed limits could have a big effect in Winnipeg. Many Winnipeggers tell us that they would like to use their bikes for short trips, but they do not feel safe riding in Winnipeg traffic. So, they drive a vehicle instead. Statistics Canada estimates that there are 400,000 bicycles in Winnipeg. Our annual counts indicate that, on an average summer weekday, 30,000 Winnipeggers commute by bicycle. That leaves 370,000 bicycles ready to go for a ride when the conditions are right!

What you can do

The City is in the early stages of considering lower speed limits on residential streets. If many local residents’ associations tell City Council that they want 30 kph on their streets, councillors are likely to pay attention. Our neighbourhood associations should send this message to their councillors loud and clear.

Basic laws of physics dictate that vehicle’s stopping distance and the kinetic energy that it delivers in a collision are a function of the square of the vehicle’s speed. Thus, drivers in vehicles that travel faster are less able to avoid collisions, and the likelihood of killing a cyclist or a pedestrian increases exponentially with the vehicle’s speed:

- ↳ **At 30 kph, 5% of pedestrians struck by a vehicle will die.**
- ↳ **At 40 kph, 25% will die.**
- ↳ **At 50 kph, 55% will die.**



- The European Union Transport and Tourism Committee has recommended 30 kph speed limits for residential areas, with the specific goal of reducing by 60% the number of children under 14-years-old killed by motorists.
- In April 2012, a Toronto Public Health Officer report entitled Road to Health: Improving Walking and Cycling in Toronto recommended, inter alia, to support the increased use and safety of walking and cycling, including by: “Reducing vehicle

- Reduced fuel use, cleaner air, and lower CO2 emissions. Less fuel is burnt as a result of less acceleration and more people getting around by walking, cycling, and public transport. In German 30km/h zones, car drivers use 12% less fuel.



BOOK REVIEW

Plato's Revenge: Politics in the Age of Ecology

By William Ophuls

MIT Press, 2012, 256 pp.

AT THE HEART OF EVERY recent political discussion is an increasingly insurmountable problem: the challenge of ecological scarcity. At the heart of the ever-deepening ecological crisis is the uncomfortable reality that the way we live today, the consumptive choices we make, and the way we organize ourselves socially and politically may be denying our grandchildren a future. The fact that consumer/industrial society has so eagerly jumped on the “green” bandwagon makes our situation that much more ridiculous, as though slapping on a few eco-friendly labels could radically alter the destructive consumptive patterns to which we have become accustomed.

William Ophuls confronts this ecological challenge in *Plato's Revenge: Politics in the Age of Ecology*, with a powerful mixture of ingenuity and wisdom. Ophuls finds current approaches that seek to minimize ecological degradation unsatisfactory, and argues that they address symptoms rather than root causes. He writes:

I start from the radical premise that “sustainability” as usually understood is an oxymoron. Industrial man has used the found wealth of the New World and the stocks of fossil hydrocarbons to create an anti-ecological Titanic. Making the deck chairs recyclable, feeding the boilers with biofuels, installing hybrid winches and windlasses, and every other effort to “green” the Titanic will ultimately fail. In the end, the ship is doomed by the laws of thermodynamics and by implacable biological and geological limits that are already beginning to bite.

Ophuls contends that we have largely failed to grapple seriously with this anti-ecological reality. We fail because we operate from a political para-

digm or philosophy that has abandoned virtue and rejected community. He goes on to suggest that the modern political paradigm was bound for self-destruction even before signs of ecological scarcity began to emerge. What is needed is a new public philosophy. For Ophuls this takes the form of a “natural law theory of politics grounded in ecology, physics, and psychology.” *Plato's Revenge* provides the basic outline of the form such a philosophy might take.

Ophuls endeavours to envision a moral code that would provide sufficient maturity to allow for a rigorous examination of the principles we often take for granted. A moral code based on fundamental biological, physical and psychological limitations, states Ophuls, reveals the need to cultivate virtue in community rather than focus on material accumulation.

To begin this work requires some understanding of where we are and where we have come from. Civilization, Ophuls argues, was bought at a high price and modernity at a higher one — namely, a process of demoralization:

This demoralization has three aspects — the corruption of morals and mores, the undermining of morale and the spreading of confusion — and has resulted in the loss of almost all sense of honor, duty, and responsibility.

Even more significantly, the rise of rationality at the expense of both reason and tradition has left women and men without the means by which to find their intellectual and spiritual bearings.

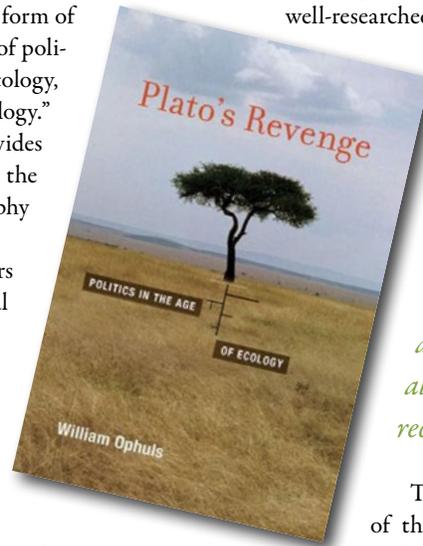
This brings us to what is undoubtedly the most dangerous part of Ophuls's work: the attempt to find a natural law, or to discover from nature how we ought to live. Natural law theory holds a particularly divisive place in the history of thought, yet Ophuls makes a compelling and well-researched argument:

Ecology, physics, and psychology — that is, biological nature, physical nature, and human nature — reveal fundamental and eternally valid moral principles on which to reconstitute our polity.

These natural laws challenge many of the preconceptions that form the modern liberal paradigm — the nature of power as an extrinsic domain exercised over some other, for example — and encourage a political form that is deeply grounded in ecology and community. The danger lies in becoming so attached to a certain political ideology that legitimate concerns, grievances or alternate perspectives are cast aside, or treated condescendingly. In my opinion, Ophuls too rapidly accepts the tenets of Jungian psychology as a way of marginalizing or controlling the dialogue between science and religion.

The use of science to perpetuate forms of control and domination is well known, and while Ophuls recognizes the gravity of this in modernity, he is not always able to avoid the temptation in his own vision. The question of how to envision a spiritually and ecologically wise politics, while avoiding the pitfalls of technocracy or fascism, is not fully answered here. Ophuls has, however, done an admirable job in laying the groundwork upon which such a discussion might be built. 🌱

—Reviewed by Joshua Paetkau



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Canada Disappoints at UN Climate Talks

Karen Rooney, Canadian Youth Delegation, on COP18

By Anika Terton, Public Education and Outreach Coordinator, Climate Change Connection

ANOTHER ROUND of global climate talks (COP18, or the 18th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) wrapped up in Doha, Qatar on December 7. Despite the comprehensive reports from the International Panel on Climate Change, COP 18 proceedings failed to deliver real cuts to greenhouse gas emissions, nor adequate financial support for developing countries to deal with climate change impacts. Countries did manage to conclude negotiations on a new commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol. Although important politically, the commitment only covers 15 percent of global emissions and leaves loopholes that allow the carryover, use and trading of hot air.

I spoke to Karen Rooney, member of the Canadian Youth Delegation to the United Nations climate change negotiations (COP18), to discuss her firsthand experiences in Qatar.



PHOTO: KEANE PLAMONDON

Karen Rooney would like to see Canada take a lead role in dealing with climate change worldwide.

You spent two weeks in Doha, Qatar in the hot desert. What's your opinion of the outcome? What are you taking away from it?

These past two weeks in Doha, we have seen very little from any of the developed nations when it comes to any desire to cut emissions, any contributions to a Green Climate Fund that would assist developing nations to deal with the current and future effects of climate change and any acknowledgement that they have a historical responsibility for causing the climate crisis and thus, must take a larger role when it comes to resolving it.

COP18 has cemented the fact that at the end of the day, money and corporate influence reign supreme at the negotiations. We've heard many times over the course of these talks that civil society is not putting enough pressure on their negotiators — which in fact is completely untrue, as when we use our voices, there is no one in the room to heed them.

Canada's Environment Minister Peter Kent said "climate change is a very real and present danger and we need to address it." Do you think Canada's approach to climate change reflects the urgency of the issue?

Absolutely not. Canada has become completely irrelevant here at COP18, as their

decision last year to pull out of the Kyoto Protocol has ensured that they have no credibility at the negotiations. Like a bad student, Canada has become the country that sits in the corner silently to reflect on its poor behaviour. At the same time, Canada continues to spout the same rhetoric that they have been for years and yet we continue to see our emissions rise, the tar sands expand and our government refuses to take any leadership at the international stage.

What do you think Canada should do to regain credibility and trust at these negotiations?

Canada must take a leadership role at the climate negotiations and in order to do that, they must begin to take responsibility for Canada's historical role in creating the climate crisis. Canada has been one of the largest emitters and contributors to the current situation, and as such, needs to contribute to mediation measures such as the Green Climate Fund.

Canada must also begin to follow the lead of the many countries around the world [that] are beginning to shift from a fossil fuel-based economy towards one that is focused on green, just jobs; this will ensure we are not only defending the interests of Canadians at home but also becoming a forward-thinking leader at the international level.

What do you see as the biggest barriers to achieving a global climate agreement?

The biggest barriers would be a) the fact that the fossil fuel industry is allowed to attend COP and have access to delegates and negotiators and b) that governments such as Canada are actively negotiating on behalf of the fossil fuel industry by seeking to weaken existing legislations (such as the EU Fuel Quality Directive) in order to open up a larger market for tar sands oil.

How is climate change viewed differently by the young people you have worked with, versus our official leaders?

It's easy for official leaders to become disconnected from the severity and the urgency of climate change. Our Canadian officials can easily return home to the comforts they are fortunate to have in this country — while many negotiators, youth and members of global civil society return home to communities already devastated by drought, fires, famine, super storms and other detrimental effects of climate change.

Youth from around the world have recognized that we are the ones who will be living with the effects of the decisions made at negotiations such as COP18, and as such, have an urgent and vested interest in making sure that our future has potential and that we will be able to enjoy a quality of life based on a green economy, not a dying, polluting industry.

When we talk about a sustainable future, in your mind, what does it look like?

To me, a sustainable future starts at home — it's a future where all Canadians have access to jobs that provide them the means to live and enjoy their lives, where those jobs do not come at the cost of the health, quality of life or human rights of their fellow human beings. It's a future where we see Canada take on a leadership role when it comes to assisting developing countries to deal with the impacts of a climate crisis they had no role in creating; where Canada is a trailblazer in renewable technologies; and where we see the interests, needs and rights of people prioritized above those who would deny us this kind of future. 🌱



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