



## Culture, Nature and Economy Entwined in the Fisher Bay Region

The journey to expand a provincial park

*Josh Pearlman, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society*

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**DARKNESS WAS JUST BEGINNING TO DISSIPATE** as we approached Moose Creek at the south end of Ebb and Flow Lake. We were intent on canoeing in the pre-dawn light, before the full sun triggered a symphony of activity. The breeze on the open water had thinned the morning fog, but here in the winding creek fog rested thick. The perfect stillness held our boat stable.

We glided, nearly blind and silent, upstream through the haze, guided by the outline of reeds along the bank. Captivated, my niece and I speculated in whispers about the subtle morning sounds whose sources were hidden to us. We stopped to soak in the peaceful moment when plodding splashes, thrillingly close by, grabbed our attention.

Our view was obscured by the veil of fog until the slow, steady advance of warmth unmasked a vignette that has played out here for thousands of years: a female moose and her calf feeding on

the roots of water lilies in the coolness of the morning. With silent reverence my ten year old travelling companion watched this moment of everyday intimacy unfold between one generation and the next of these forest ambassadors.

### **The Fisher Bay Region - A Renaissance of Richness**

Ebb and Flow Lake stretches south, tickling the belly of a healthy expanse of boreal wilderness. To the east, the Washow peninsula separates

Lake Winnipeg from the waters, reefs, islands and beaches of the southern portion of Fisher Bay.

Only 200 km from Winnipeg, the area is unique for having intact boreal forest habitats so easily accessible. Located at the interface between two distinct natural regions (the Mid-boreal lowlands and the Interlake plain) the Fisher Bay area is home to rich ecology and culture, which hold potential for sustainable economic development that honours the sacredness of these resources.

*continued on page 4 >>*



is published four times per year by the  
Manitoba Eco-Network/  
Réseau Ecologique du Manitoba Inc. at  
3rd Floor, 303 Portage Avenue  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3B 2B4  
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the Canadian Environmental Network.

*EcoCentre groups gratefully acknowledge the  
contributions of Mountain Equipment Co-op.*

Individual subscriptions to *Eco-Journal*  
are available as part of a supporting  
membership to the Manitoba Eco-Network at  
a cost of \$30. Group membership dues are  
\$50. Associate membership dues are \$100.

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**April 17 edition is March 3, 2014.**



## Reel Green 2014

### Inspiring people, celebrating nature

*by Kristine Koster*

**REEL GREEN IS AN ANNUAL FUNDRAISER** for Manitoba Eco-Network. The fourth annual event will take place at the Radisson Hotel in downtown Winnipeg at 7:00 pm, with cocktails starting at 6:30, on Saturday February 1, 2014.

Reel Green is an event that brings people to together, to be inspired, and share their appreciation for nature. Reel Green stands out from other environmental events as a way for people to reinvigorate their minds and rejuvenate their passion. It is our hope that Reel Green will bring us back to the core reason we all care about protecting the environment -- that nature has intrinsic value in its living existence and its beauty. Many people leave environmental film screenings feeling anxious, but Manitobans will leave Reel Green with a renewed sense of wonder and hope.

The night begins with awe inspiring films which celebrate nature and motivate Manitobans to support the work of protecting what we treasure: Canada's land, water, and wildlife. Following a reception of food and networking, we will present the Anne Lindsey Protecting Our Earth Awards. The evening closes by celebrating the award winners in each category: Individual, Youth, and Organization.

Reel Green helps Manitoba Eco-Network raise funds for our work in environmental education as well as networking and information services for our 71 Member Groups. If you would like to sponsor Reel Green please contact Kristine at [Kristine@mbeconetwork.org](mailto:Kristine@mbeconetwork.org). For more information please visit: [mbeconetwork.org/projects/reel-green-film-festival](http://mbeconetwork.org/projects/reel-green-film-festival)

*Tickets are \$50.00 and include a \$30.00 tax receipt. They are available online at [http://www.ticket-break.com/event\\_details/6977](http://www.ticket-break.com/event_details/6977) and at the door. Tickets are also available at the Manitoba Eco-Network office located in the EcoCentre, on the third floor of Mountain Equipment Co-op at 303 Portage Avenue.*



## JANUARY

### 23 Menno Simons College Esau Lecture Series - *How We Grow, Share and Eat: Moving towards Just and Sustainable Food and Farming Systems*

7:00 to 9:00 pm, Eckhardt-Gramatté Hall, The University of Winnipeg.

*This Land is Our Land?: Re-integrating Earth, Eating, and Ethics*

Dr. Nettie Wiebe, University of Saskatchewan

Dr. Nettie Wiebe is the Professor of Church and Society, lecturing on ethics and social and economic justice at St. Andrew's College, University of Saskatchewan. A writer, panellist and speaker on agriculture, environment, public policy and trade issues, Dr. Wiebe has been an advocate for farm families and rural communities in many forums in Canada and abroad. She served as Women's President of the National Farmers Union (NFU) from 1989-1994 and was elected President of the NFU in January 1995, the first woman to lead a national farm organization in Canada. She is the NFU's representative to the Via Campesina, a global movement of peasants and small-scale farmers. Nettie Wiebe farms with her husband in Saskatchewan, growing organic grains and pulse crops as well as raising cattle.

## FEBRUARY

### 1 Reel Green: Inspiring People, Celebrating Nature.

Reel Green: Inspiring People, Celebrating Nature, Manitoba Eco-Network's annual fundraiser, will take place from 6:30pm to 10:00pm, at the Radisson Hotel, 288 Portage Avenue, in downtown Winnipeg. This event stands out in Manitoba as a way for environmentalists to rejuvenate their passion for the movement. A screening of awe inspiring films which celebrate nature and motivate people to action, followed by a reception and awards recognizing the achievements of fellow environmentalists, will give attendees a renewed sense of wonder and hope.

#### Programme

6:30 pm - Doors open, cash bar

7:00 pm - Welcome and opening remarks

7:15 pm - Films

8:20 pm - Reception

9:00 pm - Vignettes of nominees for the Anne Lindsey Protecting Our Earth Awards, followed by the Award Ceremony

### 7 Green Drinks

An informal monthly get together of individuals working for the environment, be that in government, consulting, non-profit, or in your spare time. Make new friends, reconnect with old acquaintances, and unwind at the end of your week. 4:30pm til whenever at the King's Head Pub, 120 King St. RSVP on Facebook and invite friends and colleagues. Organized by Manitoba Eco-Network.

### 14 Winter Bike to Work Day.

Now that the winter weather has arrived, why not register for Winter Bike to Work Day? This year's event takes place Friday February 14th. Register online at: <http://winterbiketoworkday.org/commit/>

### 17 Louis Riel Day

Celebrate Louis Riel Day at Fort Whyte Alive from 1:00 to 3:00 pm. Spend the afternoon on a guided hike learning about les Voyageurs et les Coureurs des Bois. Free with regular admission.

### 27 Menno Simons College Esau Lecture Series - *How We Grow, Share and Eat: Moving towards Just and Sustainable Food and Farming Systems*

7:00 to 9:00 pm, Eckhardt-Gramatté Hall, The University of Winnipeg

*Food Rebellions: Crisis and the Hunger for Justice*

Dr. Eric Holt-Giménez

Dr. Eric Holt-Giménez is the Executive Director of Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy, a "peoples' think-and-do tank" dedicated to eliminating the injustices that cause hunger and environmental degradation. Dr. Holt-Giménez has lived and worked in Latin America where he helped organize and train farm leaders in agroecology and was a consultant to non-governmental organizations, government ministries, and foreign aid agencies. In his recent book, *Food Rebellions! Crisis and the Hunger for Justice*, co-authored with Raj Patel and Annie Shattuck, Dr. Holt-Giménez proposes equitable, sustainable solutions to the root causes of the global food crisis. He holds a Masters of Science in International Agricultural Development from University of California, Davis, and a Ph.D. in Environmental Studies from University of California, Santa Cruz.

## Feb. 28 - March 1

### Growing Local Conference

The Marlborough Hotel, Winnipeg

Workshops, displays and networking about sustainable, healthy & fair food for all. Register at [foodmattersmanitoba.ca](http://foodmattersmanitoba.ca)

Michael Moss, author of *Salt, Sugar, Fat: How the Food Giants Hooked Us*. February 27, 7:30 pm, Masonic Centre, 420 Corydon Ave. (at Confusion Corner) presented by Food Matters Manitoba & The Winnipeg Foundation part of the 2014 Growing Local Conference.

Tickets at [foodmattersmanitoba.ca](http://foodmattersmanitoba.ca)

## MARCH

### 7 Green Drinks

4:30pm til whenever at the King's Head Pub, 120 King St. RSVP on Facebook and invite friends and colleagues. Organized by Manitoba Eco-Network.

### 22 World Water Day

It has been over a decade since the United Nations General Assembly declared March 22 as the World Day for Water. The 2014 international theme is Water and Energy. Keep your eyes open for events throughout Manitoba.

Please email your event notices to [info@mbeconetwork.org](mailto:info@mbeconetwork.org).





## Fischer Bay cont'd...

Fisher Bay is made up of expansive islands sheathed in old growth forests alive with the orchestra of nesting songbirds. Seemingly endless white sand beaches are embossed with the paw prints of timber wolves and black bear, along with cautious imprints of moose, whose numbers have declined in many areas of the province.

Limestone caves underlying the area provide some of the province's most important bat hibernation sites, while shorelines offer ideal nesting habitat for the endangered Piping Plover and a riotous breeding colony of double crested cormorants. Rare sedges and orchids spring forth from the network of wetlands that filter water



“CPAWS, Fisher River Cree Nation, and the Manitoba government are embarking on a community and stakeholder outreach process to consider expanding Fisher Bay Provincial Park.

flowing through this landscape, a critical service in the fight to revive the health of Lake Winnipeg and ensure a strong future for our lake-dependent communities.

This wealth of diverse ecology has helped shape the people who have thrived on this landscape (known as Ochiwasahow) for generations. Local First Nations rely on these lands to hunt, fish, gather medicines and foods, and teach younger generations the land use practices that shape their cultural identity. With care and foresight, this region can remain as it has been for thousands of years.



### The Park – A Future for Nature, Economy and Community

Fisher River Cree Nation, with support from the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, has sought the permanent protection of these precious ecosystems in order to support cultural, community and economic resilience. Development of a sustainable ecological and cultural tourism economy, folded into the provincial park system, would be a primary component of securing a stable future for the region.

In 2011, we celebrated an important step toward realizing this goal: 85,000 ha of water,

islands and a portion of adjacent lands were designated as Fisher Bay Provincial Park. Our work continues as cultural, economic and scientific analyses have deemed the present park boundaries insufficient to provide the protection needed to safeguard the region's natural resources in harmony with sustainable commercial potential.

### The Journey Continues

CPAWS, Fisher River Cree Nation, and the Manitoba government are embarking on a community and stakeholder outreach process to





PHOTO: KELLY JONES

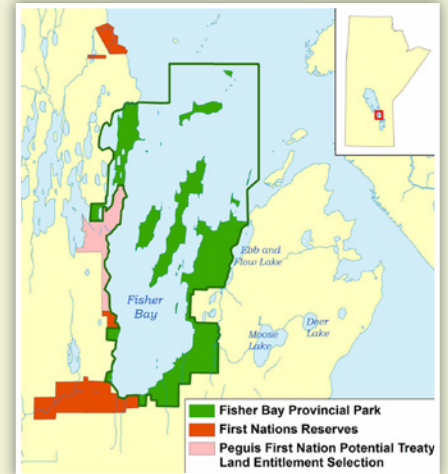
consider expanding Fisher Bay Provincial Park. We are inspired by the Manitoba government's commitment to explore this opportunity.

Forestry and peat mining are currently occurring, or proposed, within the region. As these activities are prohibited in provincial parks, we are setting out to determine how to create a larger park while accommodating various interests through boundary configuration, compensation, or other mechanisms.

Confident that a healthy boreal forest system is in the interest of all rights-holders and stakeholders, together we are undertaking the chal-

lenge of achieving ecosystem health, cultural integrity, and community prosperity in the Fisher Bay region.

Please take a moment to thank Gord Mackintosh, Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship, for working with CPAWS and Fisher River Cree Nation to explore the opportunity of enlarging Fisher Bay Provincial Park. Please let him know that you will be following the progress of this initiative and look forward to adequate protection of the Fisher Bay region. 🌿



## Lake Winnipeg and the Fisher Bay Region

Recently designated as the **World's Most Threatened Lake** by the Global Nature Fund, our once enviable Lake Winnipeg has greatly deteriorated as a deluge of excess nutrients from urban and rural landscapes inundate its waters.

The resulting toxic algal blooms suffocate the lake's inhabitants and deter would-be visitors. Industrial expansion around the lake releases more nutrients while reduction of forests and wetlands further challenge the landscape's capacity to filter out these contaminants.

The challenges facing Lake Winnipeg are daunting – but there is hope. If action is taken now, we can restore the health of Lake Winnipeg and preserve this treasured water-body for future generations. With the lake supporting thousands of jobs and providing tens of millions of dollars annually through commercial fishing, recreation and tourism, the provincial government has set a laudable target to reduce by half the nutrient loading entering the lake. With the boreal filtering over 70 per cent of the water that enters Lake Winnipeg, to reach this target it is critical that these lands, like those surrounding Fisher Bay, are maintained in a healthy state.





# Troubling “Directive 83” Could Create Precedent for Drilling in Manitoba

## An examination of Alberta’s Hydraulic Shallow Fracturing Regulations

By Dennis LeNeveu

**FRACKING, ALSO KNOWN AS** the extraction of methane by fracturing of coal seams using compressed nitrogen, began in the Horseshoe Canyon Formation in Alberta in 2002. Initially, coal bed methane wells (CBM) completed in saline formations were subject to the regulations for conventional natural gas wells, which are exempt from environmental impact assessment. Alberta’s Directive 27 issued in 2006 allowed shallow fracturing of non-saline formations below 200 metres from surface and above 200 m subject to impact assessment. Amendments to this directive and directives pertaining to baseline well water testing and well cementing procedures followed.

The recent Directive 83, issued in May 2013, permits CBM operations using compressed nitrogen up to 50 m from the top of the bedrock and horizontal fracturing up to 100 m from the bedrock top. An exclusion zone around water wells is specified. Provisions are made to protect offset energy wells and non-saline aquifers. A risk assessment, done by the licensee, must include estimations of the vertical length of induced fractures and the vertical distance to non-saline aquifers. Licensees must not use hydraulic fracturing fluids that may cause adverse effect on non-saline aquifers, and licensees are required to inform the regulator of non-compliance in accordance with the voluntary self-disclosure policy.

To date more than 166,000 CBM wells have been fractured in Alberta with well density varying between four to 12 per section. Over 7700 horizontal multistage wells have been fractured primarily into shale using large amounts of fresh water mixed with chemicals as fracturing fluids. Recently, a gelled propane mixture has been used as the fracturing fluid.

The coal seams fractured during CBM vary in thickness from 0.5 m to about 25 m and are typically encased by impermeable shale layers tens of meters thick. Coal seams are sometimes overlain directly by sandstone. The usable aquifers are usually sandstone but can be heavily fractured shale. Some of the sandstone is very impermeable and can contain oil and gas.



PHOTO: FLICKR/SMITHUCALGARY

However, there are many pathways for fugitive methane to escape into the formations during fracturing operations, including naturally occurring vertical connections and induced fractures. The

tion and the length of induced fractures. Methane leaking into a small breach in a permeable aquifer can travel rapidly up the dripping plane, potentially causing extensive contamination. In

“The injection of fracturing fluids generates pressure waves that can open existing fractures in rock and damage well cement liners beyond the extent of the injected fluids.

fractures from CBM, typically less than 20 m in length, can penetrate through the protective shale layers into the aquifers. Induced fractures from horizontal wells can be over 100 m. The injection of fracturing fluids generates pressure waves that can open existing fractures in rock and damage well cement liners beyond the extent of the injected fluids. Horizontal drilling in shale fractures the layers that protect coal seams and the overlying sandstone that contains most of the aquifers.

It is difficult to determine the exact extent and location of the aquifers that require protec-

the Retlaw-Mannville gas reservoir in southern Alberta, sour gas travelled over two kilometres from an injection well to a gas production well in less than nine months. Voids and cracks in well cement liners caused by fracturing and faulty cementing will accumulate gas that can directly enter permeable aquifers. The expansion of horizontal drilling in the shale and tight sand coexisting with CBM greatly magnifies the risk of methane contamination.

Despite the regulations in place there have been a growing number of complaints of meth-

ane contamination of well water over a wide area of Alberta. Beginning in 2006 baseline water testing was done on 4181 wells with 17 per cent found to have free gas as reported in the 2008 Science Review Panel Final Report. In 2013, free gas was found in 50 per cent of samples from over 200 groundwater observation wells in Alberta. High levels of nitrogen found with the methane are a signature for contamination from CBM. The fact that even more complaints have not been received is likely related to the non-disclosure agreements signed by many landowners in exchange for the use of their land for hydraulic fracturing.

In Manitoba, the Shallow Unconventional Shale Gas Project is assessing the exploitation of the Pierre shale. This thinly covered formation is over 400 m thick and extends over a large area of south western Manitoba. The Odanah shale aquifer is one of the upper members. The large shallow Oak Lake aquifer contains areas of highly fractured shale. Even if the shale aquifers are not directly fractured the risk of contamination from fracturing of the underlying deeper members of the Pierre shale is very high.

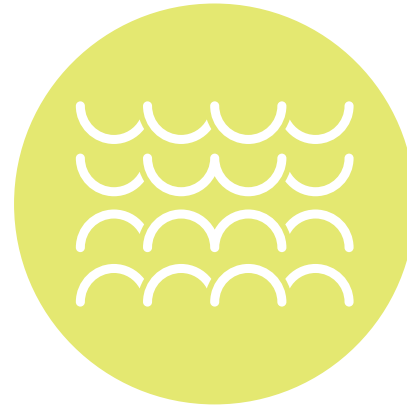
There is no indication that poisonous sour gas found in deeper formations such as the Bakken and Lodgepole occurs in the Pierre shales; however souring from bacteria that metabolize methane to produce hydrogen sulphide can develop during fracturing operations.

Shale gas wells decline in production rapidly over their lifetime requiring new wells to be constantly drilled to maintain profit margins and service debt. An economic collapse similar to the housing crisis in the U.S. could occur as new wells distributed over the continent inevitably diminish.

At present in Manitoba there are no regulations for hydraulic fracturing. The exploitation of shallow shale could begin tomorrow without assessment. This exploitation could cause extensive aquifer contamination and depletion of fresh water resources, exacerbate an economic collapse from unrecovered debt as continent wide shale resources decline and would add to the already excessive global burden of greenhouse gas. 🌱

## Resources

<http://www.aer.ca/documents/directives/Directive083.pdf>  
[http://www.manitoba.ca/iem/mrd/geo/mgstracker/swmanitoba\\_shale\\_gas\\_project.html](http://www.manitoba.ca/iem/mrd/geo/mgstracker/swmanitoba_shale_gas_project.html)  
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# Sowing the Seeds to a Green Economy in Manitoba

What the province needs to do to truly be “sustainable”

By Anika Terton

**IN A LOFTY GESTURE** that has proven to be more talk than action, last year Premier Greg Selinger announced the goal to make Manitoba “one of the most sustainable places to live on earth.” But the world is changing every day, and Manitoba needs to adopt greener and more sustainable practices to properly address the challenges of climate change and environmental degradation. However, an effective strategy requires a realistic assessment of where we are, a clear idea of where we need to go and practical ways to get there.

Over the last 20 years, Manitoba’s economy and population have grown, income per capita has gone up and the poverty rate has declined. However, Manitoba’s economic growth has come at the cost of the quality of our natural environment. Greenhouse gas emissions, the declining water quality of Lake Winnipeg and large levels of waste generated are major negative impacts of economic growth. Out of 13 jurisdictions studied in the 2012 Green Provinces Report published by Corporate Knights Magazine, Manitoba ranked near the bottom, at 11th.

The report was based on 35 published and comparable indicators of environmental health, grouped into seven areas: air and climate, water, nature,

transportation, waste, energy and buildings and innovation. Manitoba’s low ranking suffered mainly due to high greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, low waste diversion rates and lack of innovation in green technologies.

So what does it really mean to be one of the most sustainable places to live? The question invites comparison between what Manitoba has done to become a leader in sustainability, and what has been done around the world.

The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) defines a green

“Manitoba’s economic growth has come at the cost of the quality of our natural environment.”

economy as one that results in “improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities.” In its simplest expression, a green economy is low-carbon, resource efficient, and socially inclusive. In a green economy, growth in income and employment are driven by both public and private investments that reduce carbon emissions and pollution, enhance energy and resource efficiency, and prevent the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services. In the light of this definition Manitoba needs, at the very least, to address its key environmental challenges including working toward decreasing GHG emissions from transportation and agriculture, improving water quality and reducing waste generation, in order to create a green economy.

Perhaps the most important and first step for Manitoba is to address the prevalent myth that there is an inescapable trade-off between environmental sustainability and economic progress. Instead, we should adopt sustainable economic principles, which give guidance to all forms of economic activity. Affordability is a common objection to investing in environmental initiatives. After we invest in health, education, poverty reduction, infrastructure and crime prevention, what is left for the environment? By adopting sustainable economic principles, which give guidance to all forms of economic activity, we can address the above because the health of our economy and society depends on the health of our natural environment.

Concrete policy options for transitioning to a green economy not only exist, but are being implemented by many countries throughout the world. South Korea has adopted a national strategy and a five-year plan for green growth, allocating two per cent of its GDP to investment in several green sectors such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, clean technology and water. China now invests more than any other country in renewable energy. China’s total installed wind capacity grew 64 per cent in 2010. Governments that act early to establish green economy enabling mechanisms and initiatives will not only support the transition but will also ensure they are in the best place to take advantage of it.

If Manitoba is serious about Selinger’s commitment to be a global leader in sustainability, we need to look at other jurisdictions for best practices, improve upon them where possible, and adapt them to Manitoba, today. 🌱



**INSPIRING PEOPLE CELEBRATING NATURE**

On Saturday, February 1st, join the Manitoba Eco-Network in recognizing the winners of the 2014 Anne Lindsey Protecting Our Earth Awards at our annual Reel Green Celebration.

Reel Green will take place at the Radisson Hotel, in downtown Winnipeg. Doors open at 6:30PM with a cash bar, light reception and films. Contact 204.947.6511 or [info@mbeconetwork](mailto:info@mbeconetwork) for more details.

Tickets are \$50 (includes a \$30 tax receipt) and are available at the Manitoba Eco-Network office, and online at <http://www.ticketbreak.com/parktheatre>. Contact Kristine at [kristine@mbeconetwork](mailto:kristine@mbeconetwork) for sponsorship opportunities.



## Featured Book Review



### Reflections on a Marsh: The Delta Marsh Field Station's First 20 Years, 1966-1986

by Jennifer M. Shay

Delta Marsh Occasional Publication No. 4, Dept. of Biological Sciences, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada 92 pp.

**FOR A YOUNGSTER**, catching a wood frog on a class field trip, holding it in cupped hands for a few moments to better see its luminous golden eye mask, leaves a far deeper impression of what it means to be a wood frog than seeing it as a lifeless specimen on a classroom tray. Anyone who has spent time outdoors observing the natural world knows how enriching such experiences can be. Compared with learning biology in a classroom, stepping into nature's "classroom" is full of unexpected treasures, often creating deeply remembered personal experiences.

The joys of learning from nature, in nature, are at the very heart of why the University of Manitoba Field Station at Delta Marsh came into being. Jennifer Shay, having had her own rewarding experiences as a student learning and working at a field station in England, knew just how stimulating field courses could be. And how important this experience would ultimately be for preparing anyone going out to do graduate research in the field.

While the value of this type of learning was obvious to Shay and some of her colleagues, it would be no easy task to muster the resources necessary to establish a viable field station at Delta Marsh. Yet, looking back over its 45 years, with the myriad of field courses taught, research projects completed and scientific papers published, it may be surprising to realize the idea of a field station was not more widely supported, particularly given the diverse habitats and inhabitants available for study at Delta Marsh, and its recognition as one of the finest freshwater marshes in North America.

Throughout her engaging memoir, Shay shares with us the ups and downs of establishing and building up a research station. It is a testament to her determination, and her love of the marsh and learning, that she persevered so doggedly despite the challenges of decrepit buildings, inadequate resources, and sometimes skeptical colleagues. And the ever-present threat of closure that hung over the field station for much of its existence.

But equally important, and perhaps most important to the author herself, are the staff, researchers and students who made the field station come alive through their interest in the marsh and its diverse ecosystems. Whether they were studying the impacts of flooding on the marsh vegetation or learning winter survival skills building quinzees, the many students who experienced the marsh through the field station left with unforgettable memories of their time sharing, learning and eating (!) at Delta.

For all those who tasted what the field station had to offer, and for those who will never be able to experience it first hand, Shay's memoir gives us one last chance to wander through the life of the field station and experience its challenges and successes.

It was a special place right to its untimely end at the hands of the lake in 2011. Those of us who mourn its loss can only hope the thrill of learning in the field will continue to be valued for what it is - the only way to truly know a landscape and its inhabitants. 🐸

- Reviewed by Diane Kunc

*Copies of this richly illustrated memoir are available for \$22 through the University of Manitoba, Department of Biological Sciences, by contacting [Jaime.Stringer@ad.umanitoba.ca](mailto:Jaime.Stringer@ad.umanitoba.ca)*

Brian, Proud ACU Employee



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# Working with you for a Greener Future



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# A Recipe for Youth Involvement

Teenagers + Support + Resources = Action

By Ellen Cobb-Friesen, Youth Co-ordinator

**TEENAGERS.** What's the first thought that that comes to your mind when you think of those making the transition between being a kid and an adult? I'm going to bet it's not an entirely positive one. Based on conversations that I'm having with others, and what the good ol' media is telling us, there is definitely the impression that youth are simply too hip to care about the world around them – they are too busy on their phones! However, this is just not true. Youth carry in them a tremendous capacity to make a difference, but how can we encourage them on that path?

Give them responsibilities that make a difference. Many kids and teenagers today don't have the opportunity to work on everyday jobs and tasks that they will be doing as adults. This includes even basic life skills like sewing on a button, what information is needed to include to mail a letter, and how to make a home-cooked meal from scratch.

Does this mean that there is no hope for this generation and the world that we live in? Not at all! The up side is that many teenagers are spending way more time in school than in the past and as a result are extremely "book smart." They each have a huge capacity to undertake amazing projects.

This is where programs such as the Manitoba Environmental Youth Network (MEYN) have a valuable contribution to make. MEYN is actively helping to build a capable, knowledgeable and connected youth community who actively seek to create positive environmental solutions in Manitoba. We offer resources, support, inspiration, and collaborative opportunities in order to facilitate action and foster a sense of community for environmentally minded youth who often feel isolated and disempowered.


## Greenspace Conference

On November 29th over 100 high schools students and teachers from across Manitoba chose to think green on Black

Friday by attending the Manitoba Environmental Youth Network's annual Greenspace conference. The day conference, sponsored by Manitoba Hydro, included powerful and inspiring environmental workshops, activities, and discussions. The main purpose of the conference is to get students and teachers out of the classroom and in a space where they can 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. At the end of the day, participants walk away with the tangible skills needed in order to implement projects and be green leaders in the schools and communities.

Yes, phones were present at the conference, but they were used in a way that encouraged interaction and discussion. For example, participants were encouraged to live-tweet throughout the day using the hashtag #greenspace13. Some selection of tweets throughout the day:




**GreenSpace13 participant** 

First class of the day was quite different and interesting. #UrbanAgriculture #greenspace13

29 Nov 13




**GreenSpace13 participant** 

The Culture and Consumption class really makes you change your view on society's way of consuming products. #greenspace13

29 Nov 13



**GreenSpace13 participant** 


Today I learned how to sew a button. (It's really frustrating tbh) #greenspace13

29 Nov 13




PHOTOS: NATLIE BAIRD

## Building on the Momentum

Last year, youth who attended this conference and participated in the MEYN mentorship program went on to do meaningful action projects in their schools and communities that included school-wide water audits, composting program, and a group that created pieces of art that reflected environmental issues in Manitoba. This year there are even more youth who are interested in taking action in their schools and communities. These youth have a great vision for the world that they want to live in. Before bemoaning the lack of attention span of today's youth, ask yourself how can you support them in making their visions a reality? 

To find out more information about Manitoba Environmental Youth Network programming, check out <http://www.mbeconetwork.org/youth/>



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