

Bois-des-Esprits: The Story of an Urban Forest

By David Danyluk, Save Our Seine River Environment Inc.

Long before the Seine River was ever called its by current name, it meandered for centuries unimpeded across the prairies, eroding its banks, depositing the silt downstream, creating ox-bow lakes, and seasonally flooding its riverbanks.

This river environment was teeming with life. Hundreds of plant species thrived in the adjacent meadows, forests and prairies. Many different bird species visited or lived in this rich blend of habitats. Dozens of fish species lived in the river with beavers, muskrats, ducks and turtles. Buffalo by the thousands actually roamed along the shores. This ecosystem effortlessly supported all of these diverse forms of life.

Tamed by engineers

Our own species has also been supported by this rich ecosystem. Aboriginal populations relied upon the fertile hunting grounds and the fruit bearing bushes. They lived in harmony with the habitat around them. Today, our modern communities have also grown and thrived along the shores of our prairie rivers. Winnipeg has enveloped the Seine River and our urban development now encroaches to the water's very edge. Our pipes penetrate beneath the stream and roadways are suspended above it.

Our engineers have tamed the river into an obedient tool. We have severed the river from its natural, prairie watershed with our City's Floodway Diversion and forced the river to cross underneath through a 48" pipe. We have altered its course and reduced its volume to suit our needs. We have drawn its water by the hundreds of thousands of liters to irrigate our recreational spaces. In exchange, we direct the filthy runoff from our lawns, roofs, driveways and streets into it, and let the little river carry it away. We have produced an urban river and still the Seine manages to remain a vibrant habitat.

It is almost unbelievable that our insatiable appetite for urban growth has overlooked a significant piece of this original environment. A small testament of this glorious, natural ecosystem has been spared from our urban expansion and the impacts that follow. An undisturbed, pristine forest remains within our community! This perfect 80-acre forest is a beautiful mixture of River Bottom Forest, ancient Ox-bow Wetlands, Tall Grass Prairie and a 100-year old Bur Oak Forest (how many floods have they survived?). It still welcomes and supports the most diverse range of species in the region.

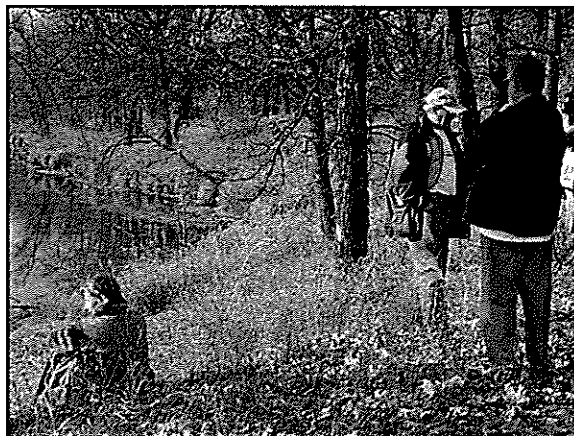
But this is not just a natural forest; it is also a heritage forest. The forest is aptly named the Bois-des-esprits—a legacy in spirit, not concrete. To remind us of a time when the first Manitobans could tread lightly on the environment, a breathtaking aspen grove has emerged in a

clearing, once a Métis homestead. The surrounding oaks were harvested as timbers for homes, fuel and building ox-carts. These white aspen are quietly reclaiming what space the forest once shared with the settlers. A Métis settler and entrepreneur lived across the river. Louis Riel Sr. used the clean, renewable resource of the river's current to power a gristmill. This early accomplishment and his name would be forgotten, had his son not brought our Province into Confederation.

An ecological jewel

The Bois-des-esprits is a sample of what the Seine River environment once was before the modern City of Winnipeg existed. The City Naturalist describes it as, "an ecological jewel." This unique forest is also rare because of its size. It is of a size that hopefully can withstand our ambitions for more homes, more bridges, more streetlights, more concrete, more vehicles... But if it is going to last as a habitat, all of it must be protected. Its size determines how resiliently it endures human stressors.

The City of Winnipeg and Save Our Seine River Environment Inc. (SOS) worked very hard for several years on a major study called the Seine River Greenway Study. It required four additional sub-studies covering river hydrology and hydraulics, bank stability, vegetation audits and history of the



At the Bois des Esprits "Discover Our Seine" event in October 2003. Photo by David Danyluk

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views of the Manitoba Eco-Network or its
member groups.

In Memorium

The Eco-Network is saddened to note
the passing of two valued members of our
environmental community in the past year.

Mr. Walter Danyluk was a recipient of
the Manitoba Eco-Network Environmental
Award. As a government employee, he is
credited with overseeing the creation of
most of Manitoba's provincial parks. He is
also known for his active opposition to
many industrial activities in parks, which

he thought inappropriate.

Charlotte Ferree was a supporting mem-
ber of MEN for many years. She generously
provided us with some of our most popu-
lar library holdings, renewing subscriptions
over the years for important publications
such as the Ecologist and the Journal of
Pesticide Reform.

Our condolences to their families.

ECO

Women's Integrative Health Conference

A health conference on Saturday,
March 20, will examine the relationships
in women's lives. Relationships with
each other, and family members, with
their own bodies, between work and
home, their relationship with food and
the environment and even money.

The 2nd annual Women's Integrative
Health Conference at the Wellness Insti-
tute on Saturday March 20 features a key-
note presentation by Terri Knox called
The Power of You which looks at how
positive attitudes can trigger enthusiasm
and creativity. Knox is also presenting on
balancing work and life, one of over a
dozen breakout sessions through the day,
and a wrap up session called The Com-
plete Power of You.

Manitoba Eco-Network Executive Di-
rector Anne Lindsey will join Organic U-
Pick market gardener Roland Reenders in
one session called Why Organic? look-
ing at the ecological, health, social and
philosophical impetus to shift one's per-
sonal diet in the direction of organically
produced food.

Other featured presenters include Dr.

Brenda Maxwell on conventional and
holistic healing, therapist Jane Markestyn
on Relationship Tune-Up, Educator
Marilyn Bileski on World Meditations
and Psychotherapist D'Arcy Bruning-
Haid on the Ten Gifts Life Has to Offer.

There are also several active sessions
to engage participants in Yoga, Pilates,
Belly Dancing, and even Body Bliss, a
fusion exercise that combines Pilates and
Yoga movements.

Two financial planners address Money:
Women's Final Frontier, Registered Di-
etitian Carolyn Somerville looks at how
to TRANS-form your day by getting trans-
fat out of your diet, and a pharmacist
looks at both hormone replacement
therapy and alternatives.

The one-day session at the Wellness
Institute, 1075 Leila Ave., Winnipeg,
costs \$65 and includes lunch. An op-
tional Salute the Sun early morning yoga
session costs an additional \$5. For more
info, or to register for the conference, call
632-3297. A PDF file of the conference
brochure is available by email request to
info@wellnessinstitute.mb.ca. **ECO**

Eco-Network Steering Committee, 2003-2004

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Pete Walker, Manitoba Federation of Labour

Research Protects Caribou Habitat A look at Manitoba's Reindeer

By Heather Laird

Did you know that there are wandering caribou within a day's drive of Winnipeg? Most people are unaware that Manitoba is home to several thousand woodland caribou, which are a larger and darker-coloured subspecies than their arctic cousins (and both are North American versions of the Eurasian reindeer). There are fourteen caribou ranges in Manitoba, including two relatively close to human activity, near Nopiming and Atikaki Provincial Parks.

The Atikaki-Berens and Owl Lake caribou herds have been the subjects of intense study over the last several years. The western boreal woodland caribou is listed as a threatened species by COSEWIC, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. Manitoba scientists are studying the local caribou in order to determine their needs and habitat preferences, and develop a management strategy for their continued survival.

Impacts of human activity

Doug Schindler is a wildlife biologist working from C-FIR, the Centre for Forest Interdisciplinary Research at the University of Winnipeg. His research on the caribou occurs under the auspices of the Eastern Manitoba Woodland Caribou Advisory Committee, put together by the Manitoba Model Forest. The Model Forest is a forest research and management organization that encourages and supports various studies east of Lake Winnipeg. The Caribou Advisory Committee brings together First Nations, industry, government, and environmental organizations in order to develop a viable management plan for the caribou and their habitat that takes into account all of the stakeholders in the area. The two groups of caribou that Doug Schindler is studying are the most likely to be impacted by human activity such as logging, road building and cottage development.

In 1996, it was proposed that a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) should be developed for the Woodland caribou. Up until then, very little background research had been done on caribou in Manitoba. The HSI model combines fieldwork with the most

modern computer and GIS mapping technology to provide an accurate picture of the animals' movements and what their habitat preferences are.

To gather this information, some of the caribou are captured and fitted with Global Positioning System (GPS) collars that allow their locations to be tracked. The "collaring" is a quick and humane procedure, taking less than ten minutes, and using gentle restraints rather than drugs. The location of the collared caribou is stored every three hours and this data is overlaid on maps of the area. The studies so far have revealed detailed information about the interdependence of caribou and their forest habitat.

Caribou are browsing and foraging animals and their primary food is lichen. Lichens can grow attached to trees or on



Woodland caribou heading for the nearest stand of conifers. Photo by Doug Schindler

the ground, and are most abundant in near mature to mature coniferous forest. Caribou have been known to utilize areas that have been logged or otherwise disturbed, but only if jack pines and the lichens they support are left behind. However, logging practices can affect the quality of caribou range. For example, a proliferation of deciduous regeneration such as aspens and willow can occur when the tops of trees are cut off but the roots remain. This causes "suckers" of deciduous trees to grow back the next spring, instead of the conifers and lichen that would be expected under the natural forest succession. Also, cuts next to caribou habitat can encourage the encroachment of moose

and deer, which are attracted to the new deciduous growth. The proximity of deer can be fatal to caribou because they don't have good resistance to the parasites and diseases that are common to deer. The brainworm carried by white-tailed deer can quickly devastate caribou herds.

Fire is greatest threat

Overall, Schindler believes that the greatest threat to the caribou is fire. Studies of caribou movements in relation to vegetation indicate that caribou stay away from burnt over areas, since there is no suitable forage for them to eat. Fires are common in this area, (either lightning strikes or human-caused), and a fire could devastate the caribou range.

It seems inevitable that there will be more human activity and logging in this area, but the Caribou Advisory Committee is mandated to maintain at least two-thirds of the best caribou habitat within the potential range. Careful research continues to be necessary, as mapping studies indicate that the preferred caribou range is moving slightly south. Caribou are nomadic animals that move seasonally throughout a large area. Creative management, and perhaps a preserve with non-fixed boundaries, might be necessary to preserve their forest.

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What's Happening

Feb. 2 to 6—University of Manitoba Environmental Awareness Week, at the Fort Garry Campus. Events feature speakers on hog barns and their impacts in Manitoba, the realities and prevalence of genetically modified foods, a fair trade fashion show, and alternatives to current consumptive life practices promoted by the mainstream; including sessions on voluntary simplicity, biking, composting and more! On Friday, Feb. 6, come play the Global Change Game, and stay for a vegetarian supper and wind-up. Call 474-9118 for more details, or see www.umanitoba.ca/campus/recycling. Everyone welcome and all events free!

Friday, Feb. 6—Native Orchid Conservation Inc. 3rd Annual Members' Night. The evening will include a slideshow "Biologists in Wonderland: Bush-walking in Australia", a presentation on the Bruce Peninsula Orchid Festival, raffle, refreshments and a report on the past summer's projects and activities. 7:30pm at the Dakota Lawn Bowling Club, 1212 Dakota Street, Winnipeg. Call Peggy Bainard Acheson, 261-9179 (evenings or leave message). Open to the public.

Saturday, Feb. 7—10am to 3pm, Assiniboine Park Conservatory: Seeds of Diversity Canada joins the Friends of the Conservatory in celebrating the 100th anniversary of Assiniboine Park and the horticultural heritage of Manitoba. Displays, vendors, informative guest speakers, and a full day of ideas for prairie gardeners. Bring seeds from any open-pollinated plant for the seed swap! Admission is by donation. Contact Margaret Brook at 204/986-6628 for more info.

Feb. 9—Manitoba Naturalists Society (MNS) Indoor Program. "Climate Change in Manitoba: Kyoto and Beyond" by Dr. Danny Blair, Geography Dept, U of Wpg. 7:30pm Pauline Boutal Theatre, Franco-Manitoba Cultural Centre, 341 Provencher Blvd. \$2 for members, \$4 for non-members. Call 943-9029 for more info.

Feb. 11—MNS Workshop Program "Eco-Tourism in Manitoba" with Lea Stogdale. 7:30pm at Kelvin High School. \$10 for non-members. Pre-register by calling MNS office at 943-9029.

Feb. 12—University of Winnipeg's EcoMAFIA presents "EcoEclectica", an evening of music to raise money for the Sustainable Campus project. Featuring: Four Roads Band, Jeremy Proctor, The Shifting Medium, Downtown Love Affair, 50/50 and No Joey Bells. 9:00pm at the Pyramid Cabaret. \$5 in advance or \$6 at the door. Tickets available at Into the Music, Music Trader and the U of W Infobooth. For more info, call 786-9189.

Feb. 18—MNS Workshop Program "Plants for Birds and Butterflies" with Dr. Philip Ronal from Jeffries Nurseries. 7:30pm at Kelvin High School. \$10 for non-members. Pre-register by calling MNS office at 943-9029.

Feb. 19—Winnipeg Vegetarian Association, East Indian Vegan Buffet. Punjab Sweet House, 88 Mandalay Dr. (off Inkster) 7pm. Tickets are \$9 for members or \$11 for non-members. Deadline for purchase/reservation is Feb. 17. Call 477-1530.

Feb. 21—Manitoba Eco-Network "Workshop for Citizens on Environmental Assessment" Learn more about the environmental assessment process, and how you can effectively participate. Local experts and activists will present Manitoba case studies. 9—4:30 at Knox United Church, Brandon. Cost is \$10 and includes lunch. Call Liz at (204) 947-6511 to register.

Monday, Feb. 23—New Partnerships or Old Relationships: Hydro-Development on Aboriginal Land in Quebec and Manitoba. 8:45am to 10pm, University of Winnipeg. Event will feature speakers from McGill, Simon Fraser, and Laval Universities, ME3 (Minne-

sota-based NGO), Norway House, Manitoba Metis Federation, Grand Council of the Crees, and others. For more info contact Michelle Forrest at 947-3081 or michelle.forrest@shawbiz.ca.

Saturday, Feb. 28—The Prairie Pathfinders Walking Club, in conjunction with the Save Our Seine Environmental Group, The Forks Market and the Snowman City Contest, will lead a hike along the Seine from Fermor Avenue to Provencher Boulevard as part of a three-day winter walking festival for a special event called Discover the Seine in Winter. \$5 fee includes transportation from the Forks to the trailhead. Total walk is 11km. Register on-line at www.prairiepathfinders.mb.ca or telephone 774-0190.

Mar. 1—MNS Indoor Program. "West Nile Virus National Surveillance Program: The Continuing Saga" by Dr. Robbin Lindsay, National Microbiology Laboratory. 7:30pm Pauline Boutal Theatre, Franco-Manitoba Cultural Centre, 341 Provencher Blvd. \$2 for members, \$4 for non-members. Call 943-9029 for more info.

Mar. 6-7—Wild Winter Weekend. Explore the marsh on snowshoe, test your animal tracking and winter survival skills, build a quinzhee, bake bannock, and more. Contact Oak Hammock Marsh for details (467-3300).

Mar. 10—Winnipeg Vegetarian Association—Nutrition Month Dinner at Mondragon, 91 Albert St. 7pm. Tickets are \$9 for members or \$11 for non-members. Deadline for purchase/reservation is

Mar. 8. Call 946-5241.

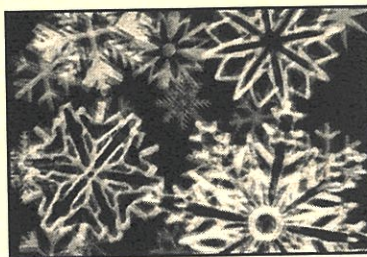
Mar., 19 to 22—"Communities & the Impact of Climate Change" CUSO is hosting an international conference that will bring together citizens and leaders from communities in Canada's Arctic, Canada's rural areas and the global South to share their knowledge and experience regarding the very real impacts a changing climate is having on their communities and their lives. The focus will be on potential actions and solutions related to reduction, adaptation and transition measures. Radisson Hotel, Winnipeg. Registration is \$250. For more info contact Louis Helbig, Conference Director at (613) 829-7445 ext. 236 or louis.helbig@cuso.ca

Mar. 20—The 2nd annual Women's Integrative Health Conference at the Wellness Institute, 1075 Leila Ave. Speakers will be presenting on the topics of organic foods, eliminating trans-fats, conventional and holistic healing, exercise, balancing work in your life, financial planning and more. Cost is \$65 and includes lunch. An optional early morning yoga session costs an additional \$5. For more info, or to register for the conference call 632-3297. A PDF file of the conference brochure is available by email request to info@wellnessinstitute.mb.ca.

Mar. 22—World Water Day. Fun water activities from Project Wet, H2Olympics, crafts, marsh excursions, and more. Contact Oak Hammock Marsh for details (467-3300).

Mar. 27—Hawk Watching Eco-tour. Explore Manitoba's best hawk-viewing areas on this day-long excursion. Bus leaves from Forks or Oak Hammock Marsh. Contact the Centre for details (467-3300).

Community Workshops on Climate Change—Portage la Prairie and Area, Feb. 3; Russell and Area, Feb. 19; Gimli and Area, Mar. 3; Winkler and Area, Mar. 10. Participants learn about climate change, energy efficiency incentives, greenhouse gas reduction opportunities for municipal operations and more. Action planning for creating climate-friendlier communities also occurs. For more info and to request an invitation package contact Climate Change Connection at (204) 943-4836 or climate.connection@mts.net. See also the Municipalities section on www.climatechangeconnection.org/pages/emissions.html



A Positive Story for Discouraged Activists Guidelines On Erosion Control

by Lindy Clubb

For all those activists out there, here's some good news for a change. Manitoba Conservation's Environmental Approvals Branch has attached a new clause (conditions for permits) to all proposals that involve work in and around water bodies. Plans by the proponent to prevent soil and sediment loss will be evaluated according to the new guidelines.

How did it come about? A whole lot of people attended a Winnipeg conference in November called "Learning From One Another" (organized by the Northern Plains Chapter of the International Erosion Control Association and the North American Stormwater and Erosion Control Association of Manitoba.) And did we get an education.

Erosion control tools

Bruce Webb and Trent Hreno were there from Manitoba Conservation. Kathy Fisher came from Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Industry, Highways, and Agriculture Manitoba were all well represented. We listened to some great stories of advances, gains, and tools of the trade for erosion control on roads, slopes, and rural and urban development projects. The aim is to protect water bodies from pollution. The states of Minnesota and Wisconsin sent up some lively speakers to encourage Manitobans to adopt something similar to their regulatory environment. It's good for both ecology and the economy to produce and follow plans, install products, and schedule maintenance and upkeep to follow. I learned about the virtues of ston logs, floating mats, blankets, software programs for design, soils and stormwater management plans, and the success rates of native plantings in Manitoba. Native plants are drought resistant, adaptable, and are working very well. If they were entered in a plant race, they'd win. And the tools in the toolbox for erosion control are producing just as well.



Artificial thatch over a seeded slope keeps the seed and soil out of waterways. Photo by Mark Myrowich

Province agrees immediately!

The presentations led to discussion, and, urged on by another caring official, I took the risk of marching up to Bruce Webb (from Manitoba Conservation), who has been helpful in the past, and demanding that we attach erosion and sediment control plans to any permits issued by the province. "Yes, we should do that," Bruce agreed. "No one asked for that before but we will do it," he added. I was shocked. It was my birthday and I felt as if I'd been given a big gift.

Overnight, Bruce drafted a couple of paragraphs and during the second day of the conference, collaborating, we added a

call for an emergency measures component to the plans. Boom, it was a go. Trent Hreno, Bruce's boss, confirmed the environmental soundness of adding erosion and sediment control (ESC) to permits and so it was adopted right then and there. Later, Joe O'Connor in provincial fisheries deemed it 'beneficial'. I remember times when it was a struggle to get the various municipal, provincial and federal departments and programs and branches to talk to one another. All the more reason to have conferences that bring us all together. Things have changed, and the actions by the Environmental Approval Branch mesh nicely with current programs by Conservation Districts and Federal

fisheries to maintain the health of the water and fish stocks by protecting riparian zones. There are so many benefits to new regulations that help the environment. A license condition calling for ESC plans will stimulate industry and developers, consultants and engineers to educate themselves in this area, train the operators and contractors, budget for devices and methods, and keep the soil from spoiling the water. It's ethical

see "Erosion Control ..." on page 6 ►

Guidelines for the Preparation of Erosion and Sediment Control Plans

From Manitoba Conservation

A plan should include:

- A map showing the areas on the site to be protected, and the direction of surface water flows;
- Identification of areas requiring special protection, such as surface water bodies or areas susceptible to groundwater pollution;
- A description of temporary and permanent erosion control measures and sedimentation containment measures. This includes a description of materials to be used and installation procedures;

- Standard detail plans for erosion control measures and sedimentation containment measures;
- A discussion of maintenance measures;
- A description of emergency plans—responsibilities for identifying emergency situations, contacts for notification, materials available on site, and equipment available on site; and
- Identification of responsibility for plan implementation—an onsite person responsible for all aspects of the installation, maintenance and removal of erosion and sediment control works.

Erosion Control

...continued from page 5

and often practical to protect the environment. Where people don't volunteer to respect our water, enforceable regulations remind them.

Acting in good faith

A Minnesota Resource Professionals Alliance speaker had done his homework for our Canadian regulations. He asked who in the audience (hundreds of professionals) had read the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. One hand went up. He told us that we had promised people we would abide by the Act, and so we should. It was a simple, conscientious reminder to act in good faith for the public. I loved it. And if we know such Acts exist and aren't being followed or practiced or en-

forced, all the better when our own departments make it mandatory, like payments for services. As Bruce Webb explains "Where the Environment Act proposal does not contain a plan we would *require* them to develop one as a license condition."

The department will review the plans, match them to their lists and techniques for best management practices, and offer advice. Right now Bruce has the plans for expansion of the floodway on his desk. There's a good start. And for such projects as road building, dredging and channeling, shoreline stabilization, bridge replacements, irrigation piping, etc., people will put now principles into practice. Perhaps they will begin policing themselves, with the department sending such a strong message.

My advice? Ask for what you want. It may be given, even when no one there knows it's your birthday. **ECO**

Bois-des-esprits

...continued from page 1

Greenway. In this study, it was recommended that the Bois-des-esprits be preserved.

Save Our Seine realized it needed a plan, and formed a partnership with the Riel Development Corporation, with support from Minister Ron Duhamel. Together they commissioned a Park Plan Study by Gaboury Préfontaine Perry Architects (GPP). In 2000, the Park Plan recommended that the forest be preserved with a network of low-impact trails, a footbridge, and canoe launches. Most importantly, an interpretive centre should be built nearby to inform visitors of the sensitive habitat and its heritage value. The study recommended the former Riel Mill Site (now vacant) as the safest place to welcome and inform visitors.

Bulldozers go into action

Meanwhile, in April 2002, bulldozers went into action to build yet another bridge for cars through the still-unprotected forest. SOS raised the alarm that this forgotten natural space, an important part of our community and our culture, was at risk. The public outcry found its way into the media and captured the attention of the City.

The City of Winnipeg supported the community's Park Plan and launched a program to invite other levels of government to help in the funding for the City's Natural Park. To lead the way the City committed \$2.1 Million that preserved over 60 acres. The City challenged the community to help and SOS raised over \$115,000, which would be doubled by the City of Winnipeg to \$230,000.

It is very fortunate that the Province of Manitoba owns 38% of the forest through a joint venture with the Ladco Company. As such, SOS approached them for support of the Bois-des-esprits. MLAs Nancy Allen and Linda Asper were very supportive. After the spring election, Nancy Allan was joined by MLAs Theresa Oswald and Christine Melnick. These representatives proceeded to champion the project within their government. After a cabinet shuffle, the newly minted Ministers of Housing and Family Services (Melnick) and Labour and Immigration (Allan) brought the issue to caucus.

Government and community together

As a result, on December 29th 2003 the City of Winnipeg, The Province of Manitoba and Save Our Seine announced the first ever partnership to protect and preserve the Bois-des-esprits. The Province helped secure a total of 66 acres. This is an example of how the government and the community can work together to protect their invaluable natural resources.

Today there are still 15 acres that need to be preserved. The City and Province are exploring land swap options and other sources of funding, including the Federal government.

We must secure the last 15 acres, which includes the homesteads' aspen grove and ancient oaks. These acres will ensure that the Bois-des-esprits will have the best chance to be a pristine treasure to share with future generations.

For more information you can contact Save Our Seine River Environment Inc. (SOS) at (204) 470-9247, e-mail coordinator@saveourseine.com, or visit the website: www.saveourseine.com, or mail P.O. box 83, 208 Provencher Blvd., Wpg, Mb, R2H 3B4. **ECO**

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What's new?

Grassy Narrows to Consider ABITIBI Offer

by Susanne McCrea, Boreal Forest Network

Abitibi Consolidated has put an offer on the table for the community of Grassy Narrows First Nation to consider.

Community members have been maintaining a road blockade since December 3rd, 2002, in protest of the devastating logging activities of Abitibi-Consolidated. Clearcutting for the Kenora mill threatens to wipe out what's left of the mature forest on Grassy Narrows traditional land. The deforestation is having a significant and direct impact on their treaty and Aboriginal rights.

The offer comes after a significant amount of pressure on the American consumer marketplace.

Consumer pressure

The Boreal Forest Network (BFN) assisted Sacramento Bee reporter Tom Knudson with his revealing and detailed report "The State of Denial", which appeared in April 2003. The series of articles carried titles like "Shifting the Pain" and "Scarring the Boreal." It pointed out to readers that conserving forests in the U.S. without reducing demand for new forest products was condemning the forests and aboriginal people of Canada, among other countries.

BFN discovered that the Minneapolis Star Tribune, the largest newspaper owned by the McClatchy Company, is buying

paper from Abitibi. This paper is harvested from the heavy logging of Grassy Narrows' Whiskey Jack forest for newsprint to feed the Kenora mill.

Knudson continued to keep the headlines coming with articles, including one exposing the McClatchy Company as a major U.S. purchaser of Abitibi paper harvested from the forest on Grassy Narrows' traditional land.

On October 9, 2003, Grassy Narrows Deputy Chief Steve Fobister registered the communities' opposition to this purchase of newsprint, in writing, to the president of the McClatchy Company, Gary Pruitt.

"We are struggling to save the last few patches of the old growth forest as well as trying to protect our trap line areas that are slated for clearcutting", wrote Fobister. "As a purchaser, you are contributing to the further devastation of our culture." Pruitt responded that executives of the Minneapolis paper had discussed the

situation with Abitibi Consolidated. "We understand that they have been meeting with the tribe," Pruitt said in his statement. "We believe Abitibi is making a concerted, good faith effort to identify the tribe's concerns and find mutually acceptable ways of resolving them."

Community member and blockade organizer Joe Fobister disagreed. Fobister said the tribe had a meeting with Abitibi executives in September but it was not productive. "What we want is for the clearcutting to stop," he said.

Pressure on Abitibi was stepped up when the competing Minneapolis paper, City Pages, published news of the Star Tribune's source of newsprint.

Partnership Proposal very general

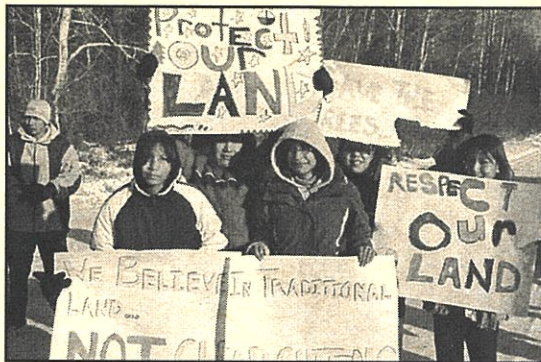
The offer from Abitibi came in early November 2003. "We listened to the offer and now we'll take it back for community consultation," said acting Deputy Chief, Steve Fobister. "It would be premature to say anything else."

Abitibi senior official Don Hopkins and entourage met with Fobister and other members of the community of Grassy Narrows, on November 11, 2003, in Kenora. Hopkins presented a one page, pre-written document that Abitibi calls "A Partnership Proposal". Much of it is very general and would need a great deal of fleshing out before any agreement could be reached. Fobister said it's far too early to predict an outcome.

More than a year has passed since the blockade went up in protest of Abitibi's logging in Grassy Narrows traditional territory. Canadian law requires significant and meaningful consultation with First Nations when an infringement of their rights occurs. This consultation has not occurred and, therefore, all logging should be stopped until this issue is resolved. Meanwhile, the blockade will stay in place.

The Sacramento Bee articles can be found on the internet at: www.manitobawildlands.org/docs/. For more info, please contact the Boreal Forest Network at (204) 947-3081.

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The youth of Grassy Narrows started blockading logging roads in late 2002, bringing media attention to the remote community. BFN photo



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Featuring Sandra Steingraber: Child Enviro Health Conference

Sandra Steingraber, PhD, an internationally recognized expert on the environmental links to cancer and reproductive health, will be the keynote speaker for an upcoming conference on children's environmental health to be held in Winnipeg. A cancer survivor herself, Ms. Steingraber is the author of "Living Downstream: An Ecologist Looks at Cancer and the Environment." This highly acclaimed book presents cancer as a human rights issue, and was the first publication to bring together data on environmental toxins with newly released data from U.S. cancer registries.

Ecology of motherhood

Her subsequent book "Having Faith: An Ecologist's Journey to Motherhood", explores the intimate ecology of motherhood, and reveals the alarming extent to which environmental hazards now threaten each crucial stage of infant development.

A highly sought-after public speaker, she has received numerous awards, including being named as a Ms. Magazine Woman of the Year in 1997. Amongst other accomplishments, she served on U.S. President Clinton's National Action Plan on Breast Cancer and has been recognized for her ability to serve as a translator between scientists and activists on medical and ecological issues.

Sandra Steingraber will speak on the evening of Thursday, June 3 (the venue is yet to be finalized), to open "Exposed for Life: a Conference on Children's Environmental Health".

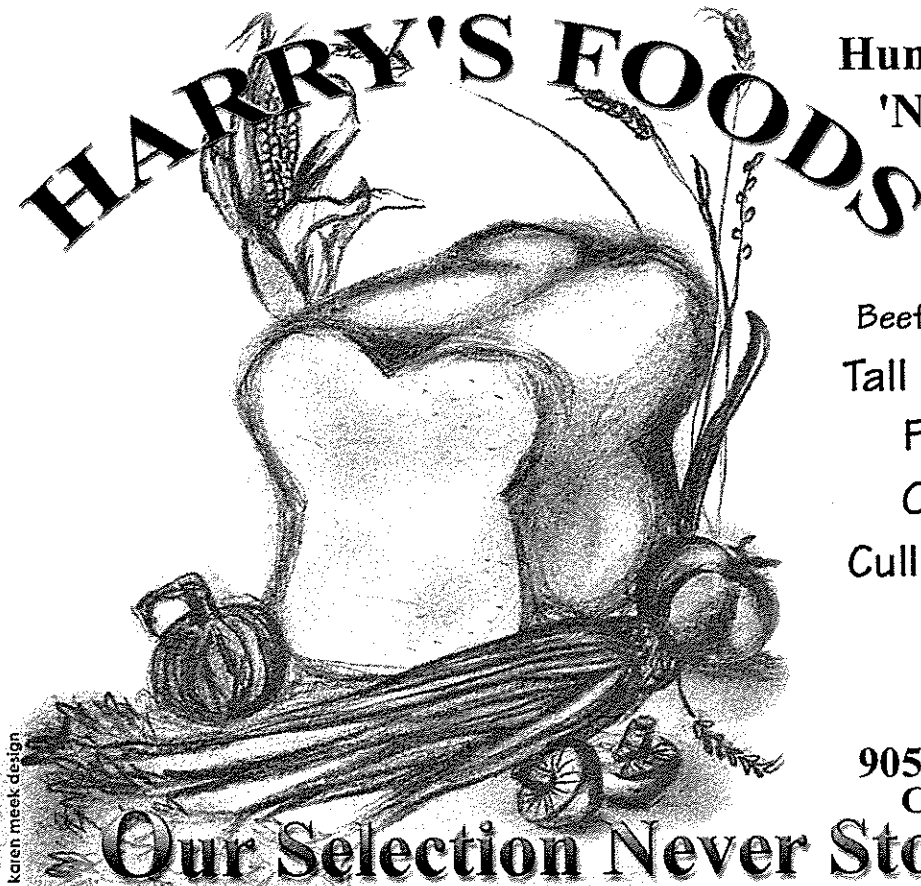
Manitoba Eco-Network is pleased to be involved in planning this event with a number of other community groups, as part of the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg's Environment Committee. The conference aims to put children's environmental health front and centre on the agenda of policy-makers and others involved in care for children, and aims to provide information and resources to people in the community who want to create change.

Topics related to children and environment

Friday, June 4 and Saturday, June 5 will offer plenary sessions and workshops on a wide range of issues related to children and the environment. These include: everyday exposure to toxic substances, the impacts of climate change, the importance of green space, and drinking water safety. Special attention will be paid to the particular issues facing aboriginal communities, and people living in disadvantaged economic situations. A lineup of excellent speakers and resource people will be on hand to provide examples, explain the issues, and highlight available resources.

More detailed information will be available over the next month or so on the websites of both the Social Planning Council (www.spcw.mb.ca) and the Manitoba Eco-Network (www.web.net/men). You can also contact the conference coordinator, Gaylene Hamilton at 943-2561. Mark your calendars now for this important event!

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High Hopes for Efficiency in Manitoba

By Anne Lindsey

In what is slated to be a major restructuring of the Manitoba agencies and crown corporations that deal with resource efficiency, the Province is gearing up to launch a new organization. The announcement of the temporarily named "Efficiency Manitoba" was made by no less than four cabinet ministers at Beaverlodge Elementary School in December. The school exemplifies one of the key goals of this new agency: to engage a whole "community" (in this case, students, parents, administrators, and school staff) in a process of reducing energy and water use, and reducing waste. This community was guided successfully through the process by the "Power Smart Energy Manager" program of the Pembina Trails School Division. It has resulted in major cost savings for the school, and a better-informed and highly committed group of people—two more goals of Efficiency Manitoba.

Integrated approach to resource efficiency

The new agency wants to offer an integrated approach to resource efficiency in Manitoba communities—at household, institutional, commercial and local government levels. It is being billed as a "one stop shop" for expertise and financial

incentives for resource efficiency. In Manitoba communities, audits, similar to the home and business energy audits now offered by Manitoba Hydro's Power Smart program, will determine potential areas for savings in energy and water use and waste generation as well as possibilities for transportation management. The agency wants to be in a position to leverage available federal dollars in a number of areas related to energy use so that Manitoba communities can benefit.

Plans call for Hydro's Power Smart to be integrated into the new agency, and considerably ramped up to include other green issues. Natural gas conservation is to play a key role. Other agencies slated for integration include the Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation and the Manitoba Tire Stewardship Board as the agency seeks to bring greater efficiency to waste reduction efforts around the province.

Working with local partners, Efficiency Manitoba will tailor audit and conservation programs to fit individual communities. The hope is that work on efficiency upgrading will result in increased employment opportunities. Municipalities and local governments should see savings both through cuts to energy and water bills, and through delay of infrastructure redevelopment. The new agency also aims to support research and development, and to promote small-scale renewable energy opportunities, such as ground-source heat pumps. Strengthened building codes and standards will be an important backdrop for the other work of the agency.

Modeled on Ontario program

Efficiency Manitoba is modeled on a successful program that has operated for several years in Ontario. The Green Communities Association is a non-governmental organization operating in a number of communities to offer similar "green home audits". In Ontario, Green Communities programs have resulted in impressive savings in both costs and energy, as well as water. In some cases, the job creation record has been significant.

In this province, government is mandating the new agency, although plans call for an arm-length relationship, and board governance. Currently, the major order of business is putting an operating structure in place so that the agency can open its doors in September.

For further information: check out www.manitobaenergy.ca

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Merging Sustainable and Healthy Housing in West Broadway: Energy Audits and Building Materials

By Shirley Thompson and Roselle Miko

Poverty and lack of home ownership are barriers to living in ecologically friendly, healthy and safe housing, and to accessing Manitoba Hydro's energy and cost-saving PowerSmart program. As well as your pocket book, the house you live in affects your health, the environment and resource distribution. Housing produces a large ecological footprint to build and operate—particularly in the extreme climate of Winnipeg. Ecological footprints are "environmental" accounting tools to determine the sustainability of our life choices at the individual, community or national level. The ecological footprint of an average Canadian is 8.8 hectares, exceeding the 1.8 biologically productive hectares available to each person world-wide. If everyone lived like Canadians, 4.9 planets would be needed. Both heating our houses and building houses have large environmental costs, as you will discover if you measure your own ecological footprint at <http://www.earthday.net/footprint>.

Many Canadian cities, including Winnipeg, have an older housing stock. In Winnipeg, 68.6 % of homes were built prior to 1971, while houses in inner city neighborhoods such as West Broadway are significantly older, with only 3.8% built after 1971. West Broadway is an inner city neighborhood, with just one-third the annual average household income of Winnipeg. Many houses are energy-inefficient and subdivided into apartments by absentee landlords. The costs of heating these drafty houses often bleed impoverished peoples' limited incomes, while still leaving them cold. With rising energy costs looming on the horizon, poor people and renters often lack the necessary funds to take advantage of available energy efficiency programming or to upgrade aspects of their housing such as increased insulation levels, improved vapour barriers, windows, doors, caulking and weather stripping, etc..

Healthy housing choices are limited by affordability and availability—only the wealthy can afford to purchase custom-built healthy housing. There are few other choices. Only 1% of all new home construction in Canada is built to an environmental standard, such as the R2000 standard, which is a voluntary building standard that considers human health and the environment. In a recent Canada Mortgage and Housing study, a survey found a: "...growing demand for housing that provides a clean air environment. Commonly listed irritants in respondent's homes included pollution from traffic, pes-

ticides, and cigarette smoke. Other sources included gaseous furnishing and carpets, as well as mold, mildew, and dust."

Participatory research being undertaken by Roselle Miko, a Natural Resources Institute master student at the University of Manitoba, is focused on housing in Winnipeg's West Broadway. Consideration is given to green materials that would improve the environmental and health impacts of housing. The needs of low-income housing providers and renters in terms of environmental cost-saving programs are assessed. With an interest in merging sustainable and healthy building design,

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Roselle has volunteered to assist the West Broadway Development Corporation to consider incorporating additional resource and energy efficiency in its building projects.

West Broadway Development Corp. (WBDC)

WBDC's mandate is "to renew and revitalize West Broadway through responsible leadership and participation of people who live, work, and play in the neighborhood with a vision of a stable, healthy, safe neighborhood that is diverse, welcoming, vibrant, clean and self reliant". The WBDC is actively involved in many local projects such as the Youth Builder's Program which empowers youth aged sixteen to twenty-nine to change their lives through a program that focuses on education, work skills and employment, and neighborhood revitalization.

WBDC's commendable efforts at renovating and constructing affordable housing to help solve housing issues of vulnerable populations cannot fully factor human health and eco-efficiency into their retrofit equation. Cost constraints, the lack of awareness of the impacts of housing and limited knowledge of the availability of "green" products presently prevent it being incorporated into designing retrofits and buildings. Indoor air quality is impacted by products used in renovations and new builds. One issue in particular, indoor air quality, is often missed when addressing the housing needs of poorer people.

Studies from both the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation indicate that populations living in poor housing are at increased risk for several health problems, such as asthma, bronchitis, and other respiratory ailments.

EZ Plan action research in West Broadway

In step with WBDC's community approach, Roselle is applying a participatory approach, referred to as the "EZ" Plan. Residents identify their neighbourhood's environmental concerns and then develop strategies to collectively work together to tackle these issues. Roselle's research focuses on "green" neighborhood housing revitalization by: 1) developing a "green" materials data base to assist in building environmentally healthy houses; and 2) assessing environmental programs by conducting home energy efficiency audits with West Broadway residents and organizing a workshop with housing providers to discover their needs and provide education.

A "green" materials database?

A green material database, specifically focused on environmentally-friendly building materials and products, does not exist for Winnipeg and is being developed as part of Roselle's research. Criteria for choosing green materials will be developed based on existing definitions and models of green products.

In keeping with the movement towards green procurement, Roselle's database will help fill a void by providing informa-

tion on currently available building materials and products in Winnipeg. In addition, the database will enlarge the scope of green procurement by targeting housing providers and providing the province and city with additional information focused solely on green building products and materials.

Energy or Environment Auditing

In order to determine programming needs for low-income housing owners and tenants, accessibility of Manitoba Hydro home audit programs are analyzed. Speaking with low-income tenants and representatives of community organizations that build and renovate low-income housing provides an understanding of the services needed. Currently, Manitoba Hydro's programming exists primarily for people who own their own residence. For those people that rent or live in government subsidized housing, no programming is currently targeted for them, although Manitoba Hydro has provided funding to carry out an educational workshop and to undertake a needs analysis of low-income tenants, with a view to rectify this gap.

Three different options exist for PowerSmart assessments: a home audit; an on-line survey; and a mail-in energy assessment. Many low-income earners cannot afford the up-front cost of the home audit, called Power Smart EnerGuide In-Home Assessment at \$75, let alone pay the cost of implement-

ing audit suggestions to qualify for the residential loan. Although an on-line energy assessment is available at www.hydro.mb.ca/home_comfort, accessibility to the program is limited by technology. Anyone without access to computers and the internet are excluded from this option. As well, the assessment's accuracy is dictated by the quality of the answers to very technical questions that may be difficult to comprehend if English is a second language. Furthermore, the on-line assessment cannot be used to apply for an EnerGuide for Houses Energy Efficiency Retrofit Grant. The final option, the mail-in energy assessment, may not be used to qualify for the Energy Efficiency Retrofit Grant. Manitoba Hydro needs to extend the scope of their home audits to fully incorporate the many other environmental and health impacts of housing.

Merging sustainable and healthy housing

As healthy housing is a basic human right and housing has large environmental impacts, sustainable and healthy building design should be merged. Not only should housing address environmental health but also the pocketbooks of the poor by reducing their water and energy bills. As a small step towards this end, a sustainable and healthy housing workshop is organized for this winter to profile green materials and to demonstrate straightforward activities to improve indoor air problems and energy efficiency at little or no cost.

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Improving the energy-efficiency of housing must allow for low-income needs. Photo by Roselle Miko

Welcomes extended to:

New Manitoba Eco-Network Member Groups

Consumers Association of Canada, Mb Chapter

218 Osborne St. S., Winnipeg, MB R3L 1Z3
Contact: Gloria Desorcy
Phone: (204) 452-2572 or 1-888-596-0900
Fax: (204) 284-1876
Email: info@consumermanitoba.ca
Website: www.consumermanitoba.ca

The Consumers' Association of Canada, Manitoba Branch is an independent, non-profit, volunteer organization dedicated to educating and informing consumers and to representing the best interests of consumers to all levels of government and to all sectors of society. They strive to empower consumers to make informed choices by providing access to resource information and other educational material as well as acting as a referral agency.

Native Orchid Conservation Inc.

117 Morier Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R2M 0C8
Contact: Peggy Bainard Acheson
Phone: (204) 231-1160
Fax: (204) 231-4448
Email: adames@mb.sympatico.ca
Website: www.nativeorchid.com/

Native Orchid Conservation Inc. is a non-profit organization, founded in April of 1998, whose purpose is to protect unique mini-ecosystems and their plant communities. This primarily involves native orchids but can also extend to other rare and/or endangered plants.

Oak Hammock Marsh

1 Snowgoose Bay, Box 1160, Stonewall, MB R0C 2Z0
Phone: (204) 467-3305
Fax: (204) 467-9028
Email: ohmic@ducks.ca
Website: www.ducks.ca/ohmic/

The Oak Hammock Marsh Interpretive Centre is dedicated to fostering public awareness and knowledge of the inherent values of wetland ecosystems throughout North America, and to marshaling public support for their conservation.

Pembina Valley Conservation District

Box 659, Manitou, MB R0G 1G0
Contact: Cliff Greenfield
Phone: (204) 242-3267
Fax: (204) 242-3281
Email: pvcd@cici.mb.ca

The Pembina Valley Conservation District (PVCD) was formed in October 1989. The district covers an area of approximately 4270 km² (427,000 ha) and includes the Pembina Valley, the Tiger Hills, the Red River Valley, and the Pembina Escarpment. The district's focus is on conservation farming and water management. Some projects include small water retention structure development, forage seed assistance, grassed runway construction, bank stabilization, public education, and wildlife habitat preservation.

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Group members are entitled to nominate representatives for a position on the Eco-Network Steering Committee. Group membership is open to any non-governmental, non-profit group which has as one of its objectives the enhancing or furthering of environmental quality, protecting the environment or environmental education.

A supporting membership includes a subscription to **Eco-Journal** as well as notice of events and regular updates on issues and is open to any individual.

