

ECO-JOURNAL

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UNESCO World Heritage Site Proposed for Manitoba- N.W. Ontario The Boreal Heritage Initiative

By Don Sullivan, Executive Director, Boreal Forest Network

The boreal forest, or taiga, is an almost continuous band of coniferous forests circling the countries of the circumpolar North. The boreal in Canada is also home to almost a million indigenous people, who are among the most dispossessed segments of Canadian society, but, they still retain a strong connection with their cultural traditions and value their traditional ways of life.

The Precambrian Boreal Shield, North America's largest terrestrial ecosystem, covers approximately 8 million square kilometers (3,088,872 square miles). It covers northern Quebec; Labrador; much of Ontario, the Adirondack Mountains of New York; parts of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota; the central and northern portions of Manitoba; northern Saskatchewan; a small portion of north-eastern Alberta; and large areas of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. According to an Environment Canada report, only three percent of the Precambrian Boreal Shield is strictly protected from all forms of large-scale industrial resource extraction activities.

Large-scale resource development

The negative impacts to this important North American ecosystem are from large-scale resource development activities, primarily logging, hydroelectric dams and transmission lines, underground and open pit mining, and oil and gas exploration. Most of what is produced from these activities (over 80%) is exported to the United States for consumption.

The Boreal Forest Network (BFN) has embarked with the Natural Resource Defense Council (NRDC), Manitoba Wildlands and others on an ambitious long-term campaign to promote the sustainable use of the last remaining tracts of boreal forest ecosystem in North America, which we are calling the

"Heart of the Boreal". A major component in this ambitious campaign is an initiative begun in 2002 to create an UNESCO-World Heritage Site along the Manitoba- North West Ontario border, which we call the "The Boreal Heritage Initiative".

In late April 2004, Canada's Minister of the Environment

unveiled an updated, tentative list of proposed World Heritage Sites in Canada. The "Atikaki/Woodland Caribou/First Nation Component", as the Manitoba- northwest Ontario site is called, was included on the list. Canada's Minister of the Environment stated, "these places are of outstanding universal value to all humankind and reflect our human creative genius. They are of exceptional cultural or natural significance. Safeguarding these natural and cultural treasures is our legacy to future generations and Canada's gift to the world."



This pristine piece of boreal forest will gain protection if designated a World Heritage Site. Photo courtesy BFN.

da's gift to the world."

The proposed Atikaki/Woodland Caribou-First Nation World Heritage Site, situated in the heart of Canada's Precambrian shield boreal forest, is 4.3 million hectares and includes such spectacular wild rivers as the Bloodvein (a Canadian Heritage River), the Berens, the Gammon, the Pigeon and Poplar. It also encompasses two provincial Wilderness Parks and the traditional territories of five First Nations, who initiated the designation proposal. It is currently the only site proposed for World Heritage Site designation in North America's Precambrian Shield boreal forest.

Eagles still soar freely

This important North American forest ecosystem is a place where eagles still soar freely, black bears roam, and the rivers are alive with the playful bantering of river otters. It is also the summer residence for millions of migrating songbirds and home to the elusive gray ghosts of the boreal—the last remaining herds of Woodland Caribou in Canada.

Both the Manitoba and Ontario provincial governments have expressed initial interest and support. However, because it may limit proposed resource development activities in the area, both provinces are hesitant about the inclusion of the First Nations component of this proposed World Heritage Site. These remote First Nations communities see the proposed Site as a

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member groups.

We Want Your Vision!

Are you part of an environmental non-government organization that is just kind of fed up with the status quo? Disappointed over and over again by decisions and policies that seem to fly in the face of what you are trying to accomplish? Feel like you're always fighting brush fires instead of getting down to the business of building a sustainable society?

Take heart. Now is your opportunity to tell the world about your vision—and get support for it from like-minded citizens.

Eco-Journal is planning to offer the centre pages of the next several issues (February 1, April 1 and June 1) to groups who want to articulate their goals and aspirations in the areas they work on. Whether this be about food, transportation systems, waste reduction, wilderness, children's health, we want you to describe—as concretely as possible—what the ideal situation will look like in Manitoba in the future, and how we achieve it.

What's in it for you?

Your group will have a clearly-stated vision and a "road map" of how to get there, ready for distribution to any and all who are interested—especially decision-makers who often need a gentle (or

not-so-gentle) nudge in the right direction. You'll have a ready-made guide (nicely laid-out and suitable for reproduction) for members of the public who want to support your cause, complete with "talking points", important contacts, and ways they can contribute. You'll be ready with the sustainable alternative when less-than-progressive ideas are floated at City Hall or the Legislature.

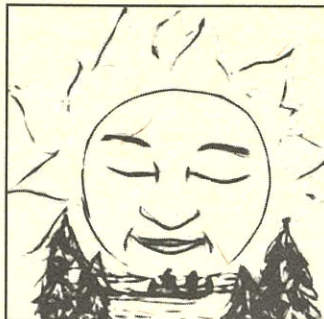
As environmental groups, we can't stop reacting to the bad stuff, but it's time to get serious about putting forward a positive agenda for discussion.

Be prepared to submit at minimum: text (straightforward and layperson's language is best), pictures or other graphic elements which help illustrate your points, contacts for more information, suggestions on who to lobby, and ways that folks can contribute.

If you are interested, contact Heather Laird, Eco-Journal editor, for guidance about deadlines, word counts and content.

Note: While individual visions are important, this opportunity is currently for environmental non-governmental groups only.

ECO



**Best wishes for a peaceful holiday
season from the staff and volunteers
at the Manitoba Eco-Network**

Eco-Network Steering Committee, 2004-2005

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Elizabeth Fleming, Member at Large

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Kristina Hunter, U of M, Faculty of Environment

Alana Lajoie-O'Malley, Eco-MAFIA

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Lise Smith, Consumers Association of Canada, MB Chapter

Pete Walker, Manitoba Federation of Labour

Student- Lead Initiative Launched New Sustainability Project at U of W

By Vivian Belik

"No institutions in modern society are better equipped to catalyze the necessary transition to a sustainable world than universities. They have access to the leaders of tomorrow and the leaders of today. They have buying and investment power. They are widely respected. Consequentially, what they do matters to the wider public."—Environmentalist, David Orr

Last winter, when Erica Young came up with an idea for a group project in her environmental sustainability class, little did she know that one year later her vision would materialize into a long-term goal for campus sustainability at the University of Winnipeg.

Young, who heads the University of Winnipeg's EcoMAFIA group (Ecological Males and Females In Action), was inspired to address the issue of sustainability at her own university because of a campus sustainability conference that she attended in the fall of 2003 at Concordia University.

Much like the students at Concordia, Young felt that assessing the level of sustainability at the University of Winnipeg "was a good way to start asking questions about the way we do things [here on campus]". Rather than idly preaching the virtues of sustainability in classrooms and lecture halls, Young and her classmates felt that the only way their school would ever become more socially, economically, and environmentally responsible was if students and faculty were made aware of the factors that impeded their university from being as sustainable as possible.

Ecologically and socially responsible era

Young and her classmates labeled their project S.U.N.S.E.T. (Sustainable University Now Sustainable Earth Tomorrow), a name that hopes to close the door on unsustainable practices at the U of W and signal the dawning of a more ecologically and socially responsible era for the university.

Following guidelines laid out by the Sierra Youth Coalition, Young and the members in her group created a business proposal for the implementation of a student-led sustainability

project at the University of Winnipeg much like the one that is ongoing at Concordia University. They decided to take their term project one step further, however, by actually presenting the finished product to the administration of their school in the summer of 2004.

Upon viewing the proposal, the administration eagerly committed itself to S.U.N.S.E.T., viewing the project as a complementary initiative to the university's future plans of revitalizing Spence Street. The project, which fell under the jurisdiction of EcoMAFIA during the summer, has slowly been gaining momentum and just this past month, two UofW students, Andrew Basham and Dini Silveira, were hired to act as co-coordinators for the S.U.N.S.E.T. project. In order to establish S.U.N.S.E.T.'s reputation on campus and in the Winnipeg community, the university officially launched the project on November 16th to more than sixty students, staff, and members of the media.

Getting Started

In the first phase of the project which will likely last about a year, students will be collecting data that will be later compiled and analyzed in order to properly assess the level

of sustainability at the University of Winnipeg. The foundation of the S.U.N.S.E.T. project is the Campus Sustainability Assessment Framework (CSAF), a tool provided by the Sierra Youth Coalition that guides staff and students in recognizing indicators of environmental and social well-being at their respective university. The CSAF allows for an in-depth analysis of campus sustainability because it assumes that there is a dynamic interplay among social, economic, and environmental factors at the university.

This interconnectedness among people and their surrounding ecosystem can manifest itself in different areas, namely, water and energy management, materials, land usage, student health and well-being, school governance, economy and wealth, community involvement, and the environmental knowledge base of students.

Putting Principles into Action

The CSAF is an extremely comprehensive overview that takes into account almost all aspects of campus life. The framework outlines about 170 different indicators that a university may find useful in assessing the health of their campus. Examples of these include whether or not there is pay equity among staff, vegetarian and vegan options at the cafeteria, and good quality air flowing through hallways and classrooms.

S.U.N.S.E.T. hopes to create an exciting opportunity for students in various faculties to collect data for these indicators as part of classroom projects.

see "S.U.N.S.E.T." on page 8 ►



The official launch of the SUNSET project with (left to right) Dini Silveira, Sarah Amyot, Lloyd Axworthy, Alan Diduk, Barbara Rapsome, and Andrew Basham.

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What's Happening

Friday, Dec. 10—Eco-Centre Holiday Open House, 3–7pm at 2–70 Albert St. Join the groups at the Eco-Centre for some holiday cheer!

Saturday, Dec. 11—Wilderness Committee-Manitoba, 5th Anniversary Party featuring Papa Mambo, Burnt, Project 1 & other musical guests. 8:00pm–2:00am at the Pyramid Cabaret. Tickets \$15 at Prairie Sky Books, Nyce Records or contact the Wilderness Committee at 942-9292.

Thursday, Dec. 16—Concerned Residents of Winnipeg (CROW Inc.) Annual General Meeting and Volunteer Appreciation Night. 7pm at 31 Alloway Ave. Please be scent-free. Call 779-3660 for more info.

Monday, Jan. 10—An Ocean Conservation Journey in BC's North, with Dr. Arthur Hanson. Journey by ferry, kayak and seaplane through this vast and challenging marine and coastal zone. Manitoba Naturalists Society Indoor Program: Pauline Boutal Theatre, Centre Culturel Franco-Manitobain, 341 Provencher Blvd. \$2 for members, \$6 for non-members. Call 943-9029 for more info.

Monday, Jan. 24—Dragonflies: Charismatic Microfauna of Manitoba, with Jim Duncan and Marjorie Hughes. Manitoba Naturalists Society Indoor Program: Pauline Boutal Theatre, Centre Culturel Franco-Manitobain, 341 Provencher Blvd. \$2 for members, \$6 for non-members. Call 943-9029 for info.

Jan. 25 and Feb. 10—Resource Conservation Manitoba is holding its 2nd Master Composter Training Course at the

Assiniboine Park Conservatory. Open to environmental educators, landscapers, gardeners, teachers, students and the general public. Deadline to register: January 10th, 2004. Space is limited. Call 925-3777 for an application form.

Beginning Wednesday, Jan. 13—Living by Water Workshops. Find out how to have an environmentally friendly yard! Free workshops are being offered from January through to March to residents who live along Winnipeg's creeks and streams. Workshops are being offered on the following dates: Wednesday, Jan. 13; Tuesday, Jan. 25; Thursday, Feb. 3; Wednesday, Mar. 3; Wednesday, Mar. 31. Location: 5006 Roblin Blvd (Naturalists Services Branch). Time: 6:30pm registration; 7:00–9:30pm presentation & question-period. For more information and/or to register for a workshop please call (204) 986-7235. A partnership of the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and the City of Winnipeg's Naturalist Services Branch.



Currants, illustration from *Earth Medicine, Earth Food*

Beginning Thursday, Jan. 27—Living Prairie Museum Prairie Planting Workshops. 2795

Ness Ave. Our 3-hour workshops include a colour slide presentation, gardening advice and native seed planting lab. Four workshops to choose from: Thursday, Jan. 27, 6:30–9:30 pm; Sunday, Feb. 6, 1–4 pm; Wednesday, Feb. 23, 6:30–9:30 pm; Saturday, Mar. 5, 10am–1pm. Members: \$35 + GST, non-members: \$40 + GST. To register, please call 832-0167 or contact: prairie@winnipeg.ca.

ECO

New developments at Eco-Centre

by Anne Lindsey

Eco-Network projects and staff have seen some changes over the past couple of months. We're pleased to welcome Tara Kenny as the new Resource Assistant in the Alice Chambers Memorial Library. Tara, with a background in both environmental and library technology, will be working on reorganizing and updating library holdings in preparation for our move to the MEC building. She'll also be available Tuesday and Thursday afternoons to assist folks with their on-line research inquiries, and use of the public registry and other library materials. Tara can be contacted at library.mbeconet@mts.net

Climate Change Connection

Susan Block has joined us in the position of Public Education and Outreach Co-ordinator for Climate Change Connection, and has settled into the office generously provided for this project by the University of Winnipeg. (You can visit Susan in the C-FIR office of the Geography Department). Rachel van Caeseele, formerly the PEO Co-ordinator, became Manager of the project and moved into the office here at the Eco-Centre when Jen Duggan relocated out of province.

Susan and Rachel have just completed the latest in a series of rural climate change workshops, with great turnouts in the Pas and Swan River. Rachel reports that the Swan River youth contingent was particularly impressive—strongly urging other

community members to get a climate change action plan underway. This brings to 11 the number of rural and northern workshops held by Climate Change Connection. They've engaged community members from across the spectrum of interests and roles, and catalysed a number of climate change related activities around Manitoba.

A new publication coming soon from Climate Change Connection: a guide to climate friendly businesses in Manitoba. This guide will be a practical tool for small and medium size enterprises in the province, seeking to operate more sustainably and more economically too! We're pleased that the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce is participating in developing the Guide, and plans to distribute it to their members.

Water Caucus

Glen Koroluk has officially taken up the position of Water Caucus Co-ordinator, in which he'll be working together with the many environmental groups with water concerns in the province to provide feedback and advice to the Minister of Water Stewardship. Glen will also be providing support to groups in their water conservation and stewardship efforts, and facilitating communications between the groups.

A very successful first meeting attracted some 20 representatives of groups from around the southern portion of the prov-

Plan Winnipeg Amendment End of Oak Point Transit Corridor

By Elizabeth Fleming

The Oak Point Transit Corridor is drawn in the city's long-term transportation plans as a short line along the old, disused CN Rail right-of-way from Academy Road, over the railway bridge across the Assiniboine River, to Portage Avenue. On November 25, Winnipeg city council's executive policy committee held a statutory public hearing on a Plan Winnipeg amendment to delete this corridor. They passed the amendment.

Why? A developer is seeking the city's approval to develop condominiums on the disused railway bridge. Before the necessary re-zoning and variance for the condos can proceed, the land designation must conform to Plan Winnipeg, the city's blueprint for future development.

City Council approved Plan Winnipeg in December 2001 after considerable public consultation, council debate, and the blessing of the Province of Manitoba. The policies read well. The overall strategy is to put downtown first, ensure compact urban form, and maintain existing neighbourhoods and infrastructure. There are policies which commit the City to integrate land use, urban design and transportation planning; to improve Transit and to direct Transit investment by rapid transit corridor development. There are laudable policies to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and promote noise reduction measures.

Progress and quality of life reports?

On paper, the Plan holds out the promise of a brave new city through civic engagement and political will. There is an encouraging "Monitoring Progress" section. Winnipeg City Council commits to monitor activities in annual Plan Winnipeg Progress Reports. The effectiveness of the Plan will be measured against quality of life indicators and made public in an annual Quality of Life Report.

In fact, Council has yet to produce a single Plan Winnipeg progress or quality of life report. The City of Winnipeg, like

any of the other 200 municipalities in Manitoba, is a creature of the Province. The City of Winnipeg Charter explicitly says that council is not required to do anything Plan Winnipeg says but that development must be consistent with Plan Winnipeg.

Deleting the Oak Point Transit Corridor from the transportation maps is premature for several reasons. Funding for a bus rapid transit system along the southwest transit corridor (further east of the Oak Point corridor) was part of a memorandum of understanding signed by Mayor Glen Murray and the other two levels of government in March 2004. Since then, newly elected Mayor Sam Katz has reassigned \$43-million of the earmarked \$50-million to community centre improvements. There is still a possibility that the federal government will help fund transit. Mayor Katz is reportedly interested in exploring the feasibility of a light rail transit system. There is still room to the south of the corridor for a dedicated transit route and this could be designated in the next Plan so that the



The railway bridge beside St. James Bridge will soon be a wall of pricey condos. Free Press photo.

land remains available—if and when the money is found.

There could also be potential major changes along Kenaston Boulevard: South of the Kenaston / Wilkes underpass, another Plan Winnipeg amendment (By-law No. 50/2004), Waverley West, is pending. The would-be developers envision 40,000 new residents on the 3,000-acre Waverley West property in southwest Winnipeg. The projected increases in average daily traffic volume for the proposed new Kenaston underpass do not include the impact of Waverley West, should it proceed.

North of the underpass, Kenaston Boulevard is currently two lanes in each direction. The City has advised the prospective owners of the Kapyong Barracks property to allow for the widening of Kenaston Boulevard. The re-development of Kapyong Barracks, which does not require a Plan amendment, will add more residents, businesses and traffic to the area.

Continuing north on Kenaston Boulevard, vehicular traffic reaches the St. James Bridge which at this point is two lanes only in each direction. Motorists already cut through River Heights residential streets to get to and from the southwest quadrant of the city. Residents have valid concerns about safety and air quality.

Residents have valid concerns

Reviewing the Oak Point Transit corridor as part of the next review of Plan Winnipeg and in the context of integrated land use, urban design and transportation planning could lead to improved air quality and reduced greenhouse gases, improved public transit and reduced traffic congestion.

The groundwork for the next review has already begun. Frankly, though, it is only worth citizens' time to get involved if Council and the Province of Manitoba follow Plan Winnipeg more closely, amend it less readily, and report regularly to the public on its progress.

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A Guide to Getting Involved in Civic Issues

There is no citizen's handbook for people who are new to City Hall and want to get involved. Here are some tips:

- Watch the news.
- Watch for notices which may appear on small yellow placards near a potential development site.
- Watch the newspaper notices of city council meetings.
- Call the City Clerk's office at 986-2171 for independent and knowledgeable assistance and information.
- The Plan Winnipeg planner can be reached at 986-3101.
- Ask to speak to your City Councillor about issues in your district.

The agendas, minutes and disposition of council committee meetings can be found on the City of Winnipeg's web-site: www.winnipeg.ca. Click on the City Clerk's department and then go to "decision making information systems".

Groups question process

East-Side Report Goes to Minister

By Anne Lindsey

A number of environmental groups are expressing dismay about the way the final report of the East Side Planning Initiative has been managed. The report went to the Minister on November 16, without being vetted by members of the East Side Round Table, the group of Manitobans charged with advising the Minister on the subject of Broad Area Planning in this vast area. Don Sullivan of the Boreal Forest Network, a member of the Round Table, was outraged at what he felt was an insult to the Round Table. Portions of drafts had been circulated to various individuals, but Sullivan complained that there was never a full draft of the report, placing recommendations in context, available for the Table's review.

Difficulties from the start

The East Side initiative was to be based on the principles developed in the Consultation on Sustainable Development Implementation (COSDI), which were adopted by the Government in October, 2000. However, the Initiative was fraught with difficulties from the start—there was confusion early on

about how the process would be managed, and when an ambitious plan was eventually developed, a lack of resources prevented its full implementation. The process called for a structure consisting of the Round Table, a First Nations' Council (with representatives from all 17 East Side First Nations), and an Advisory Committee of stakeholders. It also called for multiple visits to the communities of the East Side, only the first component of which was accomplished.

Members of the Advisory Council (which included the Manitoba Eco-Network) were also excluded from reviewing the final report and were frustrated throughout the process by inadequate or untimely information. Transparency and the need for relevant information to be available on a timely basis is a cornerstone of COSDI.

Conservation Minister Stan Struthers has said that the government will respond to the East Side report in 10 to 14 days. The Eco-Network is calling on the Minister to immediately table the report for public review and comment.

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Boreal Heritage

continued from page 1

means to better manage, plan and protect the natural resources in their traditional territories and find innovative ways of developing an alternative to the current economic model of large-scale industrial extraction.

It is the objective of the "Boreal Heritage Initiative" to promote and garner wide regional, national and international support for the preservation and protection of this large, core intact area located in the heart of North America's Precambrian Shield boreal forest. We also want to ensure that the indigenous communities continue to be part of the geographic scope of the proposed World Heritage Site, and that they have the resources necessary to fully participate in all phases of the design and planning.

To learn more about the Boreal Heritage Initiative and how you can be involved in helping us to make this World Heritage site a reality visit the following websites: www.borealnet.org, www.manitobawildlands.org, www.savebiogems.org/boreal, www.nrhc.org, or contact me at don.sullivan@shawbiz.ca.

Update (as Eco-Journal goes to press)

The Provincial Government announced its support for the proposed World Heritage Site in the Throne Speech, November 22. The Boreal Forest Network is recommending that citizens encourage Conservation Minister Stan Struthers to institute immediate interim protection, under the Manitoba Parks Act, for the entire geographic scope for the proposed site, as a demonstration of the Government's commitment. The Minister can be reached at mincon@leg.gov.mb.ca or by fax: 945-3586.

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Greening School Ground Design

By Barb Haffner

Educators have long recognized the positive impact that the physical arrangement of an indoor classroom can have on children. But in more recent years, there has been increased attention paid to the positive impact that the physical arrangement of the outdoor school grounds can have on children and on our environment.

Today's play spaces are changing because our life styles are changing. Today, up to 85% of our population lives in cities.

Some inner city schools have 95% of student populations living in apartment style housing. Children have far less daily access to natural areas than in the past. Arguably, part of having less access to green space is because there is less natural play space now than when we were children. However, it's also because we've created fewer opportunities both in the way we design our communities and how we structure our lives.

Studies show that a child's "free time" (time outside classes) is decreasing because children are spending more time in daycare and before/after school programs. As well, we structure and program our children's lives to a greater degree than we used to. Fifteen years ago our kids had 40% more free time than they do today.

What do children need on a school ground? Typically, traditional playgrounds are designed to address only physical play. Anyone who has had children in their presence knows that children engage in other types of play such as creative play, quiet play and social play. A well designed school grounds should include opportunities for all types of play.

Interest in nature can be developed

Developmental stages of children are another need not typically met by most school grounds. David Sobel, a teacher, author and leading thinker in environmental, place-based education criticizes the educational system for not recognising the stage most often missed, which are the middle years. Sobel states that during this period a keen interest in nature can be developed and states that these nature values generally stay with a person for a life time. (Sobel, 1993)

Designing healthier green spaces on school grounds provides a wide range of benefits to students, teachers and community at large, as well as to the environment. Some examples include providing more meaningful play and learning, and increased

opportunities for experiential learning. Teacher benefits include reduced discipline and classroom management problems. In fact study by Lieberman and Hoody revealed that students who study in the natural environment academically out perform those who do not. An increased sense of community pride and sense of ownership is often noted by participants of school ground greening projects. (see Cheskey, in *Nature Nurtures*) One of the greatest community benefits is that these types of projects help to create active citizens.

Looking just at the benefit of simply allowing for appropriately placed trees on school grounds we see that they shade our children, reduce cooling costs for our buildings and can reduce air temperatures. Children spend about 25% of their school day on the school yard where the danger of UV is a real issue (Cheskey in *Nature Nurtures*). Research shows that 1 in 7 children will develop skin cancer in their lifetime and approximately 80% of lifetime exposure to sun occurs before the age of 18. (Toronto Public Health). It is also a potential for shade trees to reduce building costs by 15-20%. (Konopaki, 2001 in Bell)

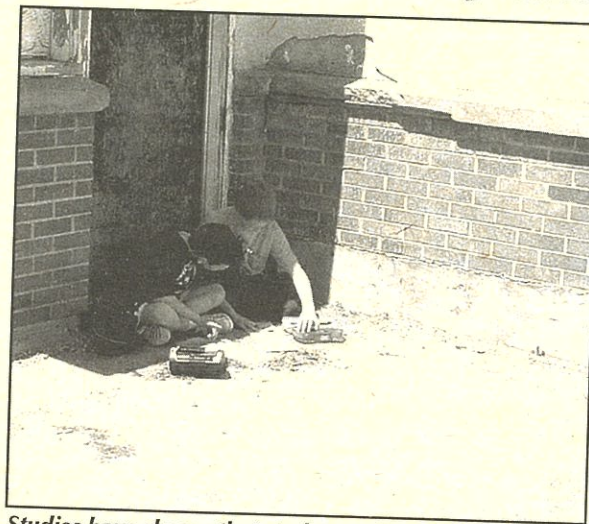
Cities have been referred to as urban heat islands for sometime now as they are generally warmer than the surrounding areas. School yards have been identified as a heat island within a heat island. A recent study showed that the air temperature of un-shaded surface temperatures on school grounds were about 20 degrees hotter than the air temperatures. (Moogk-Soulis, 2002). On a typical spring day of 25 degrees, we're sending our children out to play in the searing conditions of 45 degrees.

How do you go about making some changes to the school in your neighborhood? Evergreen can help. Evergreen is a national non-profit environmental organization with a mandate to bring nature to our cities through naturalization projects. Evergreen motivates people to create and sustain healthy, natural outdoor spaces and gives them the practical tools to be successful through its three core programs: Learning Grounds—transforming school grounds; Common Grounds—conserving publicly accessible land; and Home Grounds—for the home landscape.

Workshops to support school ground greening

The Learning Grounds Program provides funding, expert advice, resources, workshops, curriculum connections and more. Starting this fall Evergreen will be offering a series of interactive workshops in Winnipeg designed to support and enhance school ground greening projects. The series is appropriate for schools planning new projects or adding a phase to an existing project. For more details see www.evergreen.ca and follow the links to Learning Grounds, or contact the writer at bhaffner@evergreen.ca for more information or to obtain a complete list of references for this article.

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Studies have shown that students who study in nature perform better academically than children who do not study in nature. Photo courtesy of Evergreen.

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S.U.N.S.E.T.

continued from page 5

S.U.N.S.E.T. will increase the number of 'hands-on' learning experiences for students, which project coordinator Dini Silveira believes will act as a medium "for students and faculty to work together".

Jenn Logan, a member of EcoMAFIA, is the first student at the University of Winnipeg to research a S.U.N.S.E.T. indicator for course credit. Rather than completing an assignment for her recreational geography class that was displaced from her everyday reality, Logan opted to research the number of staff and students who are physically active at her own university.

"What I found quite shocking is how high our participation levels are" says Logan in reference to her discovery that 24.7 % of all UofW staff and students are active, a number which exceeds both Concordia's average (5%) and the Canadian national average for males (24%) and females (18%).

Although the members of S.U.N.S.E.T. realize that they may have a hard road ahead of them and that the benefits of the project will likely materialize only after they have graduated, there is a sense of pride and excitement among these students. They understand that in planting the seeds of sustainability today they are acting to reverse the social and ecological damages of tomorrow.

ECO

New Developments

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ince, who briefly shared information about their work. In addition, Bill Barlow, the Chair of the Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board made a presentation about the Board's mandate and heard a variety of concerns from the group, and Sam Stephenson provided an overview of the new Species At Risk Act as it pertains especially to aquatic species.

We are grateful to the Department of Water Stewardship for

providing financial support to the Water Caucus project. Glen can be reached at 947-3082.

GIS Project

Our new on-line watershed atlas has just been launched with the first maps illustrating the "human footprint", and other features in the Nelson River watershed. The atlas will attempt to remedy the dearth of spatial information on water issues in Manitoba (as information proliferates, it is most often in text format). The initial maps are being constructed using the various data sets housed here at the Eco-Network. Environmental and community groups will be able to arrange to have their own data of interest added to the maps to support their conservation work. We welcome Kevin Gaylord, a recent graduate of the GIS program at Red River College, as a dedicated volunteer on the watershed atlas project.

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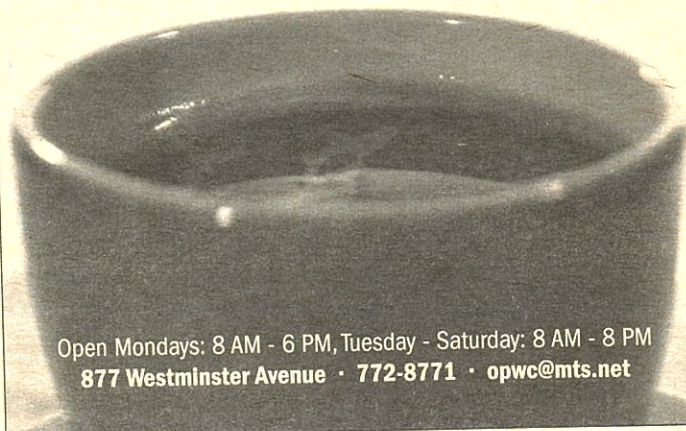
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Communities still affected decades later Mercury Poisoning at White Dog

By Julie Fine

In August 2004, a team of Japanese doctors, a nurse, professors, students, Canadian interpreters and a documentary filmmaker set out to visit two reserves in North-western Ontario.

Twenty-nine years after an initial study in the 1960s, world-renowned neurologists Dr. Harada and Dr. Fujino returned to Grassy Narrows and White Dog to conduct a follow up study to their original study on mercury poisoning in these communities. During her two-day visit to White Dog, the author of this article interpreted Japanese and English for the patients and doctors alike and gathered patient medical histories.

Historical Background

Between 1962 and 1970, the Dryden pulp & paper mill legally dumped 9,000 kilograms of mercury into the Wabigoon-English river system that runs along the Manitoba-Ontario border. Both White Dog and Grassy Narrows reserves are situated along this 480-kilometre river system.

By 1970, several species of fish contained high methyl mer-

cury levels; and 21 aboriginals in Kenora and Dryden showed very high levels of mercury in their hair. This same year, the Ontario government officially banned commercial fishing along

this river system, but allowed sports fishing to continue. The provincial government advised the people of Grassy Narrows and White Dog not to eat fish from these waters; however, it took an additional five years for the government to bring in uncontaminated fish to this area. The Ontario government ordered the Dryden mill to stop dumping mercury waste in 1970 and then in 1974 provided financial subsidies to assist with this process. In 1975 the Dryden mill fully converted to using a non-mercury process.

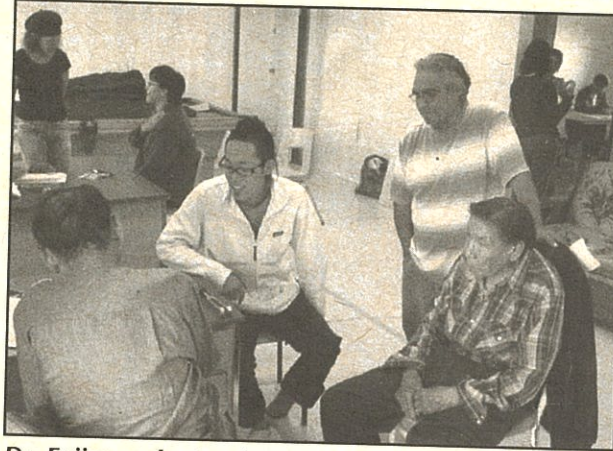
In 1975 when Dr. Harada and Dr. Fujino first visited Grassy Nar-

rows and White Dog, about 50% of the people they sampled had blood mercury levels five times higher than levels considered to be safe. In 1985 some people of Grassy Narrows and White Dog received financial compensation and in 1986, the Ontario government and the bands created the Mercury Disability Board to administer, assess and provide compensation (a total of \$17 million) to those with mercury poisoning. In 2004, it is still not advised to eat fish from the Wabigoon-English river system. In September 2004, Treaty 3 Organization called for a public inquiry into the effects of mercury poisoning to these two communities.

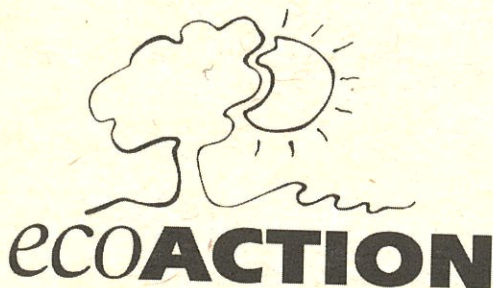
Medical Observations

Over the course of two days at White Dog, the author of this paper assisted Dr. Tsuruta with language interpretation and interviewed about 20 patients regarding their medical history. Some of the typical symptoms of mercury poisoning that the doctors were looking for included: impairment of the senses (blurred vision, poor hearing, slurred speech and poor taste); twitching and shaking; numbness in the hands and legs; pain in the joints, neck and shoulders; loss of sensation in the skin; poor muscle coordination; impaired balance; poor reflexes; partial paralysis; memory loss and dementia.

A number of the patients that we examined over the course of the visit exhibited some of these symptoms. Most prominent were the symptoms of numbness in the hands, upper body and legs; pain in the joints; loss of skin sensation; impaired balance; and poor muscle coordination. One woman in her 70's was unable to mimic Dr. Tsuruta's simple rotating wrist movements and a young teen had difficulty walking a straight line and had little sensitivity to pin pricks on her skin.



Dr. Fujino, volunteer interpreter Takashi Iwasaki, patient (seated), and interpreter (standing). Three languages were used—Japanese, English and Cree Ojibway—during several examinations.



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Mercury Poisoning

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Observations made by four doctors

Two of the four doctors concurred that residents of White Dog exhibited more severe symptoms of mercury poisoning than those at Grassy Narrows. 70% to 80% of the patients that Dr. Harada tested at both Grassy Narrows and White Dog had some level of mercury poisoning. Mercury poisoning can lead to a weakening of the immune system and therefore high levels of other illnesses in these communities may be related to mercury.

Recognition, compensation for mercury poisoning

To their credit, Canada and Japan are the only two countries in the world that recognize and compensate for mercury poisoning. Regardless of mercury contamination sites across Canada, our government recognizes and compensates only poisoning that occurred at Grassy Narrows and White Dog. Canadian doctors

and government do not recognize mercury poisoning as existing concurrently with other diseases. Where compensation is granted, there is little accompanying investigation or assessment of the impact of the poisoning.

The diagnostic tools most often utilised in Canada are readings from hair and blood samples. Unfortunately, these tend to underestimate the impact of mercury poisoning. Over long periods these readings decrease, suggesting that the problem has rectified itself, while in actuality, the symptoms tend to increase with age, particularly for those who are elderly.

The author wishes to advance this issue further through an educational forum or workshop dedicated to mercury poisoning and environmental contamination.

Anyone interested in supporting this initiative through contributions of time, expertise, or financial support, please contact Julie Fine at jlfine19@yahoo.ca.

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Dr. Harada administers a blood test on a patient, while an aid takes a hair sample for analysis.

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October 2004 Conference Reviewed Youth and Food Security Project

By Charlene Rowland

Many Canadians have no relationship with where their food comes from. The average distance food travels in Canada from farm to plate is over 2000 kms. It is of vital importance that teenagers and youth, the next generation of food consumers, begin to take a more active role in designing and maintaining an ecological food system. By empowering youth through education, both in schools and on actual farms, we encourage them to make sustainable choices in what kind of food they eat and which products they purchase. During November 2003 I was approached by the local organizing committee for the National Food Security Assembly to assist in the development of a Youth and Food Security Outreach Project.

The United Nations defines Food Security as:

Food Security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

Local, national, and global Food Security is greatly affected by the commoditization of food, the impact of genetically engineered plants on the environment and international trade policies promoted by the World Trade Organization.

Effects of globalization and poverty

This project was proposed as a method of directly educating high school students in Winnipeg about various Food Security issues. Topics included the effects of globalization and poverty, as well as the leading causes of chronic hunger which affect millions of people worldwide. An emphasis was placed on positive examples of how students can support a more sustainable food system.

The local organizing committee planned a National Food Security Assembly in Winnipeg which included presentations and workshops by many outstanding authors and Food Security advocates. The committee graciously offered 20 student bursaries to allow high school delegates to attend the Assembly and interact directly with these notable speakers. In addition, we organized a 'farm tour' which took place during the Assembly at the Wiens Family Shared Farm. This was the first time many of the teens had ever seen an actual organic farm!

Organic and Fair Trade products

As the Youth and Food Security Project facilitator, I developed a one hour presentation with the help of Dan Wiens, Canadian FoodGrains Bank, and Anne Lindsey, Manitoba Eco-Network. This informative presentation includes a thorough resource list of where students can find organic and Fair Trade products as well as various additional reading materials about other Food Security topics.

Teachers Chris Bandfield (from Sisler High School), Ken Corley and Neil Taylor (from Vincent Massey Collegiate) invited me to speak to their World Issues and Social Studies classes

and invite them to participate in the National Assembly. I was amazed by the response I received from the students! As the October 2004 National Food Security Assembly drew nearer, I visited both schools and, with the help of the teachers involved, determined which group from each class would be able to attend the Assembly.

During the weekend event I was completely honored to attend workshops with these outstanding students. Their energy and excitement was evident to everyone at the Assembly and quite infectious! As the student delegates attended numerous workshops throughout the event they admitted to me that their eyes had been really opened to several new issues. They also became determined to create actions at their own schools that will help to educate fellow students and teachers about Food Security in their community.

At the end of the Assembly there was a lovely evening banquet which all of the participants and speakers attended. During the banquet the student delegates were given a chance to make their own presentation about what new concepts and ideas they had just learned.

I realized at that moment that this 'next generation' of activists, organizers, and policy makers really does give me hope. They are learning from our guidance as we should be learning from their eagerness to create change through immediate action. It is our responsibility to offer young people many creative opportunities to get involved in this challenging movement toward a sustainable economy and more holistic environmental interaction.

The Youth and Food Security Project was created as part of the National Food Security Assembly and we are dedicated to continuing our work after the Assembly. For more information, please contact the author by emailing farmlink@animail.net.

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Student delegates, Assembly participants and farm educators at Wiens Family Shared Farm tour. Photo by Ken Corley

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Western Canada Wilderness Committee 5th Anniversary Party

Invitation from Ron Thiessen, Campaign Director, Western Canada Wilderness Committee—Manitoba office

The Manitoba crew of the Western Canada Wilderness Committee is gearing up to mark our 5th year in the province by having a party. In our preparations, it was brought to our attention that traditionally a 5th anniversary is labeled the wood anniversary. Since we prefer wood in its living state we like to think of this occasion as our tree anniversary—a celebration of life. That being said, let's talk more about the party!

The Western Canada Wilderness Committee Manitoba office is celebrating a half-decade of efforts toward a healthy and sustainable future for people and wildlife. We welcome all to join in the celebration. Here are the details:

Dec. 11, 8 pm–2 am at the Pyramid Cabaret, 176 Fort, featuring Papa Mambo, Burnt, Project 1, Absent Sound, and more...

Tickets \$15 at the door or in advance at Prairie Sky Books, 871 Westminster; Nyce Records, 99 Osborne; Wilderness Committee office, 2–70 Albert.

Looking Forward

Since anniversaries should be more about looking forward than reflecting on the past, we are focusing our celebration on Manitoba's conservation opportunities. Our wish list includes a Manitoba where: all parks are free from industrial activities such as clearcut logging; all natural regions and ecosystems are in a healthy state; all species of wildlife have a secure future; all communities are environmentally sustainable.

The Launch

The Wilderness Committee launched a Manitoba office in December 1999 in response to the outrageous practice of clearcut logging in Manitoba's provincial parks. The fact that half of Whiteshell provincial park's area is available for industrial activities and is being harmed daily by clearcut logging is an issue that demanded more attention. Although logging in Manitoba's parks continues, we are pleased to say that all new parks created in the last five years prohibit industrial logging activities within their boundaries.

We have also been very focused on creating a "conservation first" future for the vast and unbroken wild lands and water on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. It has been our pleasure to have been involved in conservation successes including: the creation of Manitoba's South Atikaki Provincial Park; successful negotiations with logging corporation Tembec for harvest block removal and deferrals in core woodland caribou habitat; improving the Manigotagan River Park Reserve proposal—tripling of the boundaries and a change in Land Use Category to prohibit industrial activity; and supporting Poplar River First Nation and Manitoba Wildlands in achieving extended protection for the Poplar/Nanowin Rivers Park Reserve.

The Wilderness Committee is looking forward to many more years of serving Manitoba's communities, wilderness, and wildlife. We endeavor to work with all Canadians to embrace a future where the air is fresh, the water is clean, and all ecosystems remain functioning as wellsprings of biodiversity.

Hope to see you at the Party!

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Area(s) of interest _____ Volunteer skills _____

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.

