

ECO-JOURNAL

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Bike to the Future

By Jackie Avent

Imagine this scene in the not too distant future: A middle-aged man rides his bicycle along Donald Street towards downtown. He is riding on the newly paved designated bike lane separated from the rest of traffic by a wide curb painted bright yellow for visibility. It's early spring, and it snowed a heavy sticky snow the night before. Thankfully, the bike lane has been plowed before the street, leaving him able to pass by the string of single occupancy vehicles tied up by the deep and slushy snow in the driving lanes.

When he comes to the red light at River Avenue, he is thankful for the opportunity to catch his breath before the gradual climb over the Midtown bridge. Beside him, a woman pulling a bicycle trailer with a bundled toddler stops too, and they share pleasantries about the weather and longer days.

Although the marked bicycle route is no longer physically separated by a curb when it goes over the bridge, the lines have been repainted to give the cyclists more room to manoeuvre around the curb lane. The public education "share-the-road" campaigns and the emphasis on cycling in Manitoba driver's education classes have increased the awareness of cycling in the city, so as the cyclist crosses the bridge the cars that pass give him a wide berth.

Cyclists become a priority

Just on the other side of Broadway he turns into the back lane and stops behind his workplace where his employer has just installed a bike cage due to the increased number of employees that are cycling to work. He secures his bike and, panniers in hand, ascends the elevator. As he gets ready for his day, he is already looking forward to the ride home. As a cyclist, the time on his bike before and after work are his favourite times of the day.

Sound too good to be true, especially here in Winnipeg?

A group of committed and energetic Winnipeggers would like

to make this a reality. Bike to the Future, a non-profit organization started after summer 2006's intense focus on cycling, is a voluntary, inclusive group of concerned cyclists working to make cycling in Winnipeg a safe, enjoyable, accessible and convenient transportation choice year-round. Those involved envision a city where cycling is embraced as the preferred mode of transportation, where cycling is integrated into urban design and planning, and where Winnipeg is recognized as a leader in cycling infrastructure and programs.

The formalized organization came out of the Bike to the Future Forum held on Wednesday September 20th, 2006 at the University of Winnipeg. Over 100 Winnipeg cyclists came together to discuss their vision for cycling in Winnipeg and to share their ideas about what is needed to make cycling better and safer in our city. The evening was organized in two parts—the first where the participants had the opportunity to hear presentations about Cycling in other Canadian Cities, the City of Winnipeg's

Parkway System, and the City of Winnipeg's Active Transportation study. The second half of the evening was participatory in nature and provided working stations where attendees could discuss various issues about cycling in Winnipeg.

After the forum, the municipal election provided an ideal opportunity to raise the awareness of cycling in the City of Winnipeg. Bike to the Future created a questionnaire that was distributed to all municipal candidates asking for their vision of cycling in the city and what they were going to do to improve infrastructure for commuter cyclists in Winnipeg. This process helped Winnipeg cyclists to be named "Most Effective Lobby Group" during the election.

An ambitious agenda over the coming year

Since the civic election, Bike to the Future has been busy meeting with city and provincial leaders to advance recommendations made in the Bike to the Future Forum Report and getting organized to pursue an ambitious agenda over the coming year, including a membership drive and continued advocacy for infrastructure improvements. The organization has also been a strong participant in trail-development groups for Marconi (new trail in River East—Transcona), WinSmart (new trail phase one from Forks to Pembina), and Bishop Grandin Greenway



Winnipeg cyclists rode to raise awareness during the fall civic election. Photo by Ian Mauro

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CEC Agrees With Environmentalists

By Anne Lindsey

In *EcoJournal* Volume 16 No. 5 (Nov/Dec 2006), Kimberley Ballance reported on the work of the Manitoba Eco-Network and a coalition of groups from the Water Caucus, to participate in public hearings on the Supplemental Groundwater Supply proposal from the Pembina Valley Water Co-operative (PVWC). The Co-op sought to develop a new source of water supply for the communities and land just west of the Red River in southern Manitoba, as they have concluded that the current supply is susceptible to drought. The new potential supply was to be pumped from the Sandilands Aquifer in southeastern Manitoba, and transported 95 kilometres by pipeline to the Morris water treatment facility.

The Eco-Network team, led by Dr. David Brooks, argued, amongst other points, that strong efforts at water conservation would be a much more cost efficient alternative to the proposed \$12 million project. The group also contended that the Sandilands Uplands region is ecologically significant, and should be given special protection. Not enough is known about the potential impacts of the water withdrawal to justify licensing the project, they said.

Government must implement policies

In its report, the Commission concluded that the current project should not proceed in the absence of an "integrated watershed plan for the Manitoba portion of the Red River Basin including associated aquifer plan(s) for the Sandilands

aquifers" and pointed to the need for the provincial government to fully implement all of its policies and regulations on water management. In particular, there is a need for a basin-wide water management plan for the Red River. The commission recommended against granting an Environment Act License at this time and the Minister of Conservation, Stan Struthers, accepted this recommendation.

Needed: Sharing agreement with US

There is still strong recognition, however, of the potential problems posed by drought in this region of the province, where the population is growing particularly fast, along with associated industrial development. The region is also a major user of irrigation waters for agriculture.

The absence of an apportionment agreement with the US to ensure adequate flow in the Red River is a serious issue that needs to be rectified. Also, work on development of a water management plan and drought preparedness for the area must become a priority.

In its letter to the Minister at the conclusion of the hearings, the Clean Environment Commission (CEC) congratulated the Eco-Network for its positive contributions to this process. Credit is due to Glen Koroluk who undertook the coordination of the work.

To view the full report of the CEC, go to <http://www.cecmanitoba.ca/index.cfm?pageID=45> and click on Pembina Valley Water Cooperative.

ECO

Eco-Errata

Anne Lindsey, author of "Mixed Reaction to Announcements" (Vol. 16, No. 5, p.1) would like to point out for accuracy that the number of in-process hog barn

proposals exempted in the current provincial moratorium on hog barn development was 13, not 17 as indicated in the article.

ECO

Eco-Network Steering Committee, 2006-2007

Andrew Basham, Eco-MAFIA

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Climate Champions—Round Two

By Anne Lindsey

We have three new additions to the Climate Change Honour Roll this month. They illustrate three different approaches to the issue of climate change, demonstrating that you don't have to be an environmental superstar like David Suzuki to start taking action.

In related news, CBC Radio's Noon Show liked the concept of Climate Champions so much that they started their own search. So far, Dameon Wall has interviewed two rural Manitobans on the show, and there will be more! We've also noticed that even if they don't use the term "Climate Champions", other media outlets are also on the hunt for Manitobans making a difference.

Unplug and Recycle

Some folks are just getting started, often because they've seen, and been affected by, Al Gore's film, *An Inconvenient Truth*. One such person is Viktoria Westgate, a staff person for the Social Planning Council. Viktoria credits the film with really giving her the impetus for starting to change things in her home. She acknowledges that her family, including three kids aged 6, 15 and 19, are just at the beginning of their journey. They started by unplugging every electrical appliance that is not currently in use. This may sound elementary, but significant amounts of energy are wasted by appliances in the "standby" mode: one International Energy Agency study showed that in a typical US home, standby losses account for about 5% of residential electricity consumption! In fact, the British government is poised to outlaw standby switches on appliances (UK losses are closer to 8%).

More attention to waste

The other major change in the Westgate household has been to pay more attention to their waste management habits—the family has reversed their "garbage to recycling" ratio to one in which the blue box gets much more use than the trash can. For Viktoria, it was a matter of talking about the issue at home, and placing the recycling box in a more convenient location. It doesn't hurt that her 6 year old is also very quick to point out garbage "mistakes". The family is also now using more environmentally-friendly cleaning products, and they have plans for more action in the summer.

Long time commitment

Another climate champion family—this one much further along on the environmental path—is that of Tim Brandt, Di Harms and their 14-year-old son, Daniel. These folks began their odyssey about 10 years ago in their Warsaw Avenue home, when Di led them in digging up their front lawn so they could start producing some of their own food. (With most of the food consumed by Canadians traveling some 2000 miles from farm to plate, this is not an insignificant step). One thing led to another, and when Tim closed his business to spend more time at home with Daniel, he realized there were many things they could do to live more lightly and to live more economically besides. For example, using an efficient wood burning fireplace insert, fueled almost entirely with scavenged

wood (tree trimmings, waste pallets, unpainted and untreated renovation and construction waste) has cut their natural gas consumption considerably, and hanging the laundry year round means they don't need to use a clothes dryer.

Bicycle advocates

Tim gave up his driver's license some time ago, preferring to use his bicycle for all of his transportation needs. He and Daniel are ardent bicycling advocates, and have built a handy bike cart for transporting all kinds of things around town, and even outside of town. Come Folk Festival time, you'll see the

family pedaling out to Birds Hill with their camping gear in tow. Tim is currently working on a cart that will allow him to transport his canoe out of town! This family also takes an award for using water efficiently, with their system of using household grey water and rain barrels for the garden, and bath water for toilet flushing. You can hear Daniel and Tim every week on their radio show, *Roots and Berries*, on CKUW FM.



Family Centre of Winnipeg staff formed an Environmental Committee to push for change. Photo by Steve Rauh

Workplace action

Our third champion this time around is Steve Rauh, a Family Therapist at the Family Centre of Winnipeg. Steve has led an effort to raise awareness amongst his colleagues at this social service agency about climate change, beginning with a presentation from Climate Change Connection, and a showing of *An Inconvenient Truth*. The movie galvanized this group into action. Many are showing up to meet as an Environment Committee to discuss what they can do to reduce emissions, both as individuals and as an agency. The Committee believes that their work on climate change is of major significance to families, including the ones they work with on a daily basis. They also believe that it is a matter of social and moral responsibility for the agency to operate in a way that minimizes its contribution to the problem.

A public discussion

They've hosted City Councillor Jenny Gerbasi, who talked about the importance of citizenship, and why it's important to be in touch with elected officials about our concerns, and they undertook a major letter-writing campaign as a result of the session. They've also held a "100 Mile Lunch" demonstrating that it's possible to find excellent food from local producers, while reducing the impact of those fossil-fuel-consuming "food miles". (See Paul Chorney's article on p.11 of this issue). As a long time activist and environmentalist, Steve believes that it's critical to talk to friends and neighbours, colleagues and congregations, to make the dialogue about climate change a truly public discussion. He's showing how to put this belief into action at his workplace, and encourages others to start their own climate change action workplace groups.

Are you a climate champion? Let us know what actions you have been taking, whether they are recent or longer term. Contact Anne at 947-6511 to tell your story!

Eco

What's Happening

April 17, May 15, June 19—Eco-Tuesdays at the Park Theatre. Monthly films and discussion hosted by the Manitoba Eco-Network. 7 pm at the Park Theatre, 698 Osborne St. S. \$6 for members, students or low-income, \$9 regular admission. Tickets at the door. April 17—*Who Killed the Electric Car?* Investigates the birth and death of the electric car, as well as the role of renewable energy and sustainable living in the future. May 15—*The End of Suburbia: Oil Depletion and the Collapse of the American Dream.* Explores the American way of life and its prospects as the planet approaches a critical era, as global demand for fossil fuels begins to outstrip supply. June 19—*An Inconvenient Truth* (extended version). Academy Award winning documentary of Al Gore's campaign to illuminate the facts on climate change.

April 11—Creating a Healthy Garden Mother Nature's Way. Manitoba Naturalists Society Indoor Program. Traute Klein created her Garden of Eden by observing Mother Nature. This garden is free of pests and diseases because it is based on nature's harmony. Learn how to create super-soil, adapt to the local environment, and practise companion planting. Restore your own health by creating a healthy garden. 7:30 pm, Kelvin High School, Rm 31. \$5 for MNS members, \$10 for non-members. Call 943-9029 to register.

April 12 and 15—2007 Native Prairie Plant Workshops. Living Prairie Museum is hosting Native Prairie Planting Workshops. Choose from one of the following dates: Thursday, April 12, 6:30–9:30 pm; Sunday, April 15, 9:30 am–12:30 pm. During this 3-hour workshop, learn about native prairie plants and how they might be included in your home or cottage landscape design. John Morgan of Prairie Habitats Nursery, a veteran of prairie planting and restoration, will conduct the workshops. The workshops include a slide presentation, discussion and wildflower seed-planting lab. Registration Fee: \$40 plus GST, includes all seeds and materials. 2795 Ness Ave. To register call 832-0167.

April 18—An Inconvenient Faith. Join KAIROS to discuss how our faith calls us to respond to the climate change crisis. Help us develop our new campaign. 9 am–5 pm at First Lutheran Church, 580 Victor St. Lunch provided. RSVP by April 10 to dhldebrand@kairoscanada.org or 1-877-403-8933 ext. 235.

April 21–22—Earth Day Celebration at Oak Hammock Marsh. Celebrate Earth Day in a fun-filled day for the whole family! Learn how important wetlands are for the health of the planet. Make your own compost and discover how to create neat new treasures from recycled trash! Call 467-3300 for more information.

April 22—2007 Earth Day at Fort Whyte. Free admission all day. Family Activities 1–4 pm. From family entertainers to Voyageur canoe rides, crafts to wandering minstrels—there's something for everyone! Enter the *EcoAdventure Race*. This intense 42 km race combines popular methods of people-powered transportation. Canoes, kayaks, bikes and blades are some of the carbon-neutral vehicles that 300 participants will use to beat the clock in this fun urban race. Be at the start line to witness the sight of dozens of canoes and kayaks cruising across Lake Devonian. Or, cheer at the finish line as racers celebrate their victory. First heat starting at 8:30 am.

April 22—Earth Day Celebration and Fundraiser brought to you by JUST Community Market Co-op and Organic Food Council of Manitoba. Confirmed performers are Madrigaia, Tribe of One, The Antigravity Project, author John Weier, and performance poet Shannon Pidlubny. Other entertainers TBA. There will be a bazaar on the patio with artisans, info booths, busking and a live music and spoken word show as well as a 50/50 draw and silent auction. Pyramid Cabaret, 176 Fort St. Doors at 7:15, show starts at 8 pm. Part of

the proceeds will go to the Organic Food Council of Manitoba. Tickets are available through www.mysweetspotproductions.com or by calling (204) 480-8565.

April 22—Celebrate Earth Day at Living Prairie Museum during Crocus Weekend. Join us on Sunday, April 22, from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm to celebrate Earth Day 2007: Healthy People-Healthy Planet. Eco-challenge yourself for a chance to win prizes; Relax & reconnect with nature walks, tai chi and nature sketching; Create an alternative cleaner, pest spray or body care product; GrOw green with seed planting, compost demo and native crocus sales. FIRST 50 people who arrive sustainably will receive a free tree! Free Admission. 2795 Ness Avenue.

April 29—Backyard Biodiversity at Fort Whyte 12–4 pm. Interested in landscaping your yard with native Manitoba wildflowers and grasses? Join John Morgan, owner of Prairie Habitats for a comprehensive workshop to get you going. Topics include: An introduction to using native plants, propagation, landscape design, plant maintenance and identification. Members \$16, Non Members \$20. Pre-register at 989-8364.

May 6, May 12, June 9, June 23—Ecotours at Oak Hammock Marsh. Are you looking for something different to do? Explore the snakes of Narcisse, Manitoba's only lizard, or native Orchids with one of our interpreters. Pre-registration is required. Call 467-3300 for more information.

May 8—Journey to the Three Rivers Yukon, Winnipeg Art Gallery. CPAWS event. See details on page 12.

May 12—Project Peacemakers Eco-Dinner at the Immanuel United Church, 755 Golspie St (Off Kimberly Ave). Tickets for this vegetarian buffet dinner are \$10 (Children 12 and under \$5). Doors open at 5:30 and dinner at 6pm with entertainment to follow. Also featuring a Silent Auction and a Guest Speaker to discuss the issue of Food Security from Global to Local. Advance tickets only. Contact Project Peacemakers at info@projectpeacemakers.org or 775-8178 for info or to order tickets.

May 19–21—Marsh Discovery Weekend. Explore the biodiversity of Oak Hammock Marsh while discovering the fascinating lives of the creatures that call the marsh home. Explore some of the best-kept secret areas of the marsh as we tour the north end of the WMA, the tall-grass prairie and the artesian spring. Call 467-3300 for more information.

May 29–30—Public meetings of the City's Ad-Hoc Committee on Non-Essential Pesticide Reduction. Meetings are scheduled for 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm on Tue. the 29th and all day Wed. May 30th. Location will be the Council Chambers at City Hall. Individuals or organizations wishing to make presentations must register in advance with the City Clerks Department.

June 5–12—Spring's Wings: Birding in Churchill. Instructor: Rudolf Koes Cost: \$850 CDN Limit: 7 participants. Explore the excellent birding opportunities of Churchill, Manitoba. The region is well-known to bird watchers as a birding "hotspot". Daily guided tours and field trips to see a wide variety of bird species and to search for such rareities as the Ross's gull, bohemian waxwing and Harris' sparrow. Unique birds common to Churchill include the arctic loon, jaeger, willow ptarmigan and Smith's longspur. A trip to the town of Churchill will allow you to explore Parks Canada National Historic Sites, visit the Eskimo Museum, and shop for souvenirs. Contact cnscc@churchillsience.ca or (204) 675-2307

June 10–14—Canadian Heritage Rivers Conference "Current Perspectives". Hotel Fort Garry, Winnipeg. For more information on the conference please visit www.riverswest.ca.



Tasty organic salad. Courtesy of Good Food Club

The SPIN on Urban Farming

By Sharon Taylor



On a chilly evening in early March, a crowd of more than 170 gardeners, aspiring farmers, students, activists, and representatives from a number of local organizations gathered to talk about urban farming. Urban. Farming. Two words that seem entirely disconnected, yet the hall at Crossways in Common—a decidedly urban locale—was brimming with new ideas, hope, and visions of community gardens and backyards stuffed with produce, and a healthier, more sustainable, more food secure city.

Both the *Seeds in the City: an Evening of Urban Agriculture* event on Friday, March 2, and the SPIN Farming workshop held the next day were sponsored and organized by the MB Food Charter, Heifer International, and Organic Food Council of Manitoba. The Friday night event featured a presentation on SPIN Farming (Small Plot INTensive Farming) by urban farmers Wally Satzewich and

Gail Vandersteen of Saskatoon, and also highlighted such local groups as Fort Whyte Farms, the Community Garden and Preserves Group at St. Matthews Anglican Church, William Whyte Residents Association, 100 Mile Manitoba, the Wiens Shared Farm, and the Winnipeg Community Garden Network.



Such interest in urban agriculture and SPIN Farming clearly exceeded the expectations of the event organizers, who had planned for 100 people for the Friday night event. This isn't so surprising, perhaps, considering that more of us are demanding locally produced food and taking action towards greener communities. SPIN Farming provides an opportunity for forward-thinking entrepreneurs to supply local food to meet the demand, while organizations like the Winnipeg Community Garden Network provide resources for gardeners and remind policy-makers of the important social value gardens have for local residents and communities.

SPIN concept removes two traditional barriers

The SPIN Farming concept, co-created by Wally and Gail, along with Roxanne Christenson of Somerton Tanks Farm in Philadelphia, removes two of the traditional barriers—excessive start-up costs and access to large chunks of land—that often prevent new farmers from succeeding. SPIN Farming is essentially a very small scale, commercial, organic growing technique. It is based on intensive relay cropping, low-cost hand tools and irrigation systems, high-value crops like leafy greens, and perhaps most importantly, small plots of land that are cheap or free and more easily accessible.

Get Involved:

MB Food Charter

(204) 943-0822

Toll free: 1-800-731-2638

Mb. Food Security: <http://food.cimnet.ca>

Organic Food Council of Manitoba, local chapter of Canadian Organic Growers

(204) 779-8546

ofcm@cog.ca

www.cog.ca

SPIN Farming

www.spinfarming.com

Winnipeg Community Garden Network

(204) 474-7949

winnipegcnetwork@gmail.com

Fort Whyte Farms

(204) 989-8354 or (204) 895-2373

www.fortwhyte.org

William Whyte Residents Association

(204) 582-0988

merandawra@mts.net

Heifer International

www.heifer.org

The Community Garden and Preserves Group at St. Matthews Anglican Church

(204) 774-1957

www.st-matthews.ca

www.geocities.com/comymn/gardens.htm

Wiens Shared Farm

wiensfarm@yahoo.ca

100 Mile Manitoba

www.100milemanitoba.org



Gerald Villegas of the Winnipeg Boys and Girls Club helps Wally Satzewich show off his multi-location SPIN farm. Photo by Julie Fine

An appealing aspect for struggling farmers and 'agri-preneurs' is that a SPIN farm can be a very profitable venture without a huge up-front investment. One full-time model touts revenues of \$50,000+ from a half acre! But SPIN Farming can also be a part-time endeavour, or even a hobby. The system typically uses long straight beds (highly efficient for seeding and harvesting) that are 2 by 25 feet or 2 by 50 feet long. A part-time

or hobby farmer might decide to plant 20 beds, or to grow single crops like potatoes or garlic. A full-time farmer or group of farmers might plant 80 beds or more with intensive relay crops like spinach.

Wally and Gail make their living growing healthy quantities of high end veggies on 15 or so privately-owned backyard garden plots in the city of Saskatoon. They sell thousands of bunches of radishes, bags of greens, and stacks of other veggies

at the Saskatoon Farmers Market each year. When I ask them what they feel are the keys to their success, Wally advocates good problem-solving and people skills, as well as an understanding that SPIN Farming is not just an occupation, it's a lifestyle. In between chatting with other workshop participants, Gail coaches, "Commitment! Dedication! Passion!"

That passion for farming that Gail is talking about is being cultivated in Winnipeg's youth through a program called Fort Whyte Farms. Located on Fort Whyte's 640 acre site, the program engages and mentors at-risk youth through four areas of urban agriculture; beekeeping, market gardening, aquaculture, and vermiculture. It is an opportunity for participants to learn not only about sustainable agriculture, but also to gain business skills through an on-site market. Many of the participants come to Fort Whyte Farms through the Boys and Girls Clubs of Winnipeg and Marymount, as well as Gordon Bell and R.B. Russell High Schools. The program is open to youth as young as 10 years old through camps and field trips, and the primary training program is typically aimed at youth from the ages of 15–18. From there, interested teens can stay on as interns or mentor new participants before moving on to other employment or higher education.

Students designed and built an irrigation system

Under development at Fort Whyte Farms is a half acre SPIN Farming site. Last summer the students designed and built an irrigation system, and this year plans are in the works to truck in see "Urban Farming" next page ►



Eco-Evening at the Park a Great Success

By Anne Lindsey

Our Eco-Evening at the Park Theatre on a cold January night was an unparalleled success. An overflow crowd came out to hear the wonderful music of Romi Mayes, sip organic wines, nibble local cheese, and watch the Al Gore film, *An Inconvenient Truth*. And many went home with useful, exciting and beautiful prizes donated by some truly fabulous supporters in the business community.

One attendee was heard to comment that this was the best fundraising event she had ever been at! High praise indeed. And there's no doubt, it was fun. The funky ambience of the Park Theatre, renovated and reopened a little more than a year ago by owner, Erick Casselman, is a major reason. This Osborne Street venue features a cool cafe, video rentals and a theatre and is becoming a hub for local events. It has been a great shot in the arm for the South Osborne neighbourhood, especially for those of us who grew up going to movies at the Park, and nostalgically wished for it to come to life again. Pack this place with a couple hundred lively folks with environmental interests, great music and an inspiring film, and success is bound to happen.



We are grateful to everyone who contributed to the evening: Erick and Melanie Casselman for generously donating the venue, Romi Mayes and her guitarist, Grant Siemens, guest host, Marilyn Maki from CBC Radio, Dr. Danny Blair who introduced the film and moderated discussion afterwards, Steve Rauh for compiling a slide show of local climate change solutions and ideas, the "sound guy" Martin Hebert, poster artist Takashi Iwasaki, the Kenaston Wine Market, the event organizers, Kristina Hunter, Lise Smith, Julie Fine, Liz Dykman and Anne Lindsey, the wonderful staff at the Park, and the many hardworking volunteers.

People liked the Eco-Evening so much that many thought we should do some more of the same (or at least similar!). So the idea of Eco-Tuesdays at the Park was born. This film series will be held the third Tuesday in the month, March through June, and will feature films and discussion on oil and energy issues. Refreshments will be available at the Park's cafe.

Coming up: April 17 *Who Killed the Electric Car*, May 15 *The End of Suburbia*, and June 19 *An Inconvenient Truth*, the Extended Version.

Eco

We gratefully acknowledge the support of all the Eco-Evening prize donors:

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Solar Solutions
Star Grill
T and T Seeds
Tall Grass Prairie Bread
Ten Thousand Villages
Vita Health Stores
Warehouse Artworks
Wild Birds Unlimited

Urban Farming

continued from p.5

compost to improve the soil. Despite the hard work, "There's not one kid out here who doesn't want to be here," says Farm Foreman Dwayne Sayers. This season he hopes to grow yellow beets, purple carrots and a variety of other vegetables to sell at the market. "Gardening is a lost art. We need to know how to grow our own food."

Urban farming. Inner-city youth producing food to feed the neighbourhood—now that's the kind of idea that connects the two words and creates a concept that's not disjointed at all.

Eco

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Small Farms Challenge—Winners All

By David Neufeld

Editor's Note: Eco-Journal Vol. 16 # 2 (March/Apr. 2006) announced the Small Farms Challenge contest. We are pleased to bring you news of the winners!

The hare-brained idea, back in 2005, was that a contest, a bit of healthy competition, might get those of us who dream about living and working in rural Manitoba to put our farm business plans on paper—thereby potentially moving some of us closer to living our dreams. A year and a half later, on 23 February 2007 we celebrated the results of that idea. We, the Agriculture Committee under the Turtle Mountain Community Development Corporation (centred in Boissevain), received thirty submissions to the Challenge. Our judges declared one overall winner and four runners up. But as one of the other 25 contestants said, "There really aren't any losers because we got to work on our dreams."

Our aim with the contest was to open our minds just a little to other ways of being agricultural. Our remote rural areas are experiencing chronic depopulation—partly due to the commodity income squeeze, partly due to enculturing our children away from the farm, and partly due to farmers thinking expansion, i.e. 'How can I manage more acres so that the low return per acre will add up to something worthwhile?' rather than intensification, i.e. 'How can we manage less land with more layering of income sources?' We figured we couldn't wait for governments to give leadership to improved farm income or to repopulation efforts and we couldn't wait for corporations to pull back from their profiteering ways. What we could do was explore different paths that held promise for farmers, rural business and communities.

Entries came pouring in

Timing is important of course. We knew, or at least hoped, that there were folks all over the map thinking responsible, healing, viable-small-farm thoughts. We weren't sure, though, how folks were going to respond to the idea of a contest. For a few weeks at the end of 2006, when our deadline for submissions was looming and we only had a few entries, our spirits drooped. But then all those fully formed and half baked entries came pouring in. Thank-you to each of you for helping us all gain a bit of hope through this challenge.

Dwayne and Shelly Logan (from Nesbitt, south of Brandon) used their childhood and adult farm experiences, and their plans for the land they presently farm, to write up their first prize submission. They're creating a small farm with livestock—goats, sheep, pigs, chickens and cattle—grains, forage and a market garden. Are they busy? Yep. Do they need part time employment off the farm? Nope. Are they happy? Most of the time, and hopeful enough to be starting on the next generation.

Glen Crawley of Clanwilliam (north of Minnedosa) sent us a convincing business plan for making a living on a quarter section (160 acres) with a cow/calf herd and a small hog operation. His daughter is also working her way back to the farm as her profession.

Roger and Marie Haynes of Franklin (near Neepawa) recently immigrated from Britain. Their plan involves a year round greenhouse heated with willow. They are pleased with the technology and the taste of strawberries at Christmas.

Robin Faye (half time Winnipeg and half Thunder Bay area) and Peter Jabbs (full time Kaministiquia, ON) are planning for a healing centre and organic vegetable farm along with a line of value-added retail products.

Matthew Wiens, David and Rachel Braun, Ruth Maendel, Marcus Rempel, Jennifer Nast-Kolb, Elisa and Paul Suderman-Barkman presented their plan for an intentional community farm producing honey, hospitality, produce and organics education.

I wish we had space to summarize all of the plans we received. Fortunately we thought you might want to study these plans in more detail, along with their financial projections, and so we put together a modestly laid out and priced book for you. Between December, when we gathered the entries, and the end of February when we celebrated the winners, we had just enough time (thanks in large part to Carl and Sally Cunningham) to extract the most salient excerpts from the submissions and fashion them into an inspiring book called *The Small Farms Challenge—your big opportunity to dream SMALL*.

You can order this book for \$10 plus \$2 postage from the TMCDC office at 1-800-497-2393 or tmedc@mts.net. We still have a few copies of its partner book, *Successful Small Farms—a study of successful small farms in Southwestern Manitoba*, that we published in 2004—for \$5 plus \$2 postage.

Significant interest in rural living

It was a bit chancy for us to go out as boldly as we did with this Challenge. Although it went national (enquiries from as far away as Quebec and an entry from Alberta), and even international with an entry from Fargo, our committee's primary role is to encourage our own community (Boissevain/Morton/Minto) to become more deliberate about making space for our children, encourage urban youth and immigrant families to become our neighbours and to farm in sustainable ways. Thank-you for helping us prove that there is significant interest in rural living and that we can do something about moving dreams to reality. Blessings and enjoy!

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Four of the five winners at our celebration conference.
Left to Right. Peter Jabbs and Robyn Faye, Marie and Roger Haynes, Dwayne and Shelly Logan, Matthew Wiens.
Missing is Glen Crawley. Photo by Jennifer Heinrichs

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Bike to the Future

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(new trail along Bishop Grandin that will eventually connect to Fort Whyte), as well as on a stakeholder committee for public consultations about the redevelopment of the Disraeli Bridge and Overpass. While the focus of the group is on cycling as transportation, this is seen as including bike lanes, designated routes on public streets and also multi-use pathways as part of an interconnected bike route network.

At this point, Bike to the Future is in the process of becoming incorporated as a not-for-profit, member-based organization in Manitoba. Individuals can purchase a membership for \$10, or

families can become members for an annual fee of \$20. The membership fees will go towards the coordination of activities and lobbying for better cycling infrastructure in Winnipeg.

We hope the ride described above isn't that far away after all.

People interested in becoming involved with Bike to the Future can visit our website at www.biketothefuture.org or e-mail biketothefuture@gmail.com. An e-mail list is used to regularly communicate information to interested Winnipeg cyclists and regular monthly meetings are held at the Manitoba Eco-Centre, 3rd Floor, 303 Portage Avenue from 5:30 pm—7:00 pm on the second Tuesday of every month. For more information call 925-3773. We look forward to seeing you there!

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Recommendations from the Bike to the Future Forum included:

The City and Province should:

- Encourage and celebrate cycling as a healthy form of transportation
- Recognize the diversity of citizens who cycle for various reasons, from recreational to commuting, in summer and winter.

The City should:

- Adopt the recommendations of the Active Transportation Study, which include:
 - Hiring an Active Transportation coordinator
 - Forming an Active Transportation

Advisory Committee

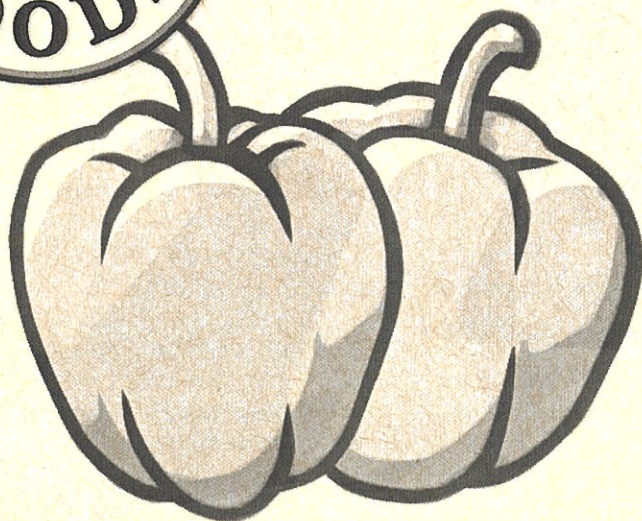
- A detailed action plan for active transportation with time frames
- A comprehensive active transportation network citywide
- Dedicated funding, at least 3% of Public Works—Streets capital budget for roadways, reflecting the number of cyclists using roads.
- Develop a detailed plan for a citywide network of commuting routes
- Integrate cycling needs into all road construction
- Integrate transit with cycling.

The Province should:

- Re-examine the Highway Traffic Act to meet the needs of cyclists
- Build on the low cost helmet program and offer other incentives to encourage cycling
- Develop a bicycle policy in the Ministry of Transportation like the government of Québec.

Manitoba Public Insurance and partners should:

- Educate drivers and cyclists on safety and mutual respect.



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Growing with the Community Since 1985

Developing a plan for joint management across the Prairie Provinces Sharing Water Resources

By Lindsay Telfer

The Prairie Provinces face major water challenges in the 21st century. Climate change, rapid and sprawling urbanization, and pressure to produce more oil and more food threaten human health, economic development and ecological integrity.

Until recently, citizens relied primarily on governments for safe, reliable supplies of water and for environmental stewardship. That has changed: citizens and civil society organizations are looking for ways to participate directly in formulating water and environmental policies. The catalyst issues are well known. In the realm of water quality, Walkerton, Kashechewan and North Battleford come directly to mind. Increasingly, problems are not limited to water quality-water quantity concerns are also prominent. Climate change, tar sands development, water shortages in southern Alberta, and conflicts over proposed dams threaten ecological integrity and socioeconomic stability.

Establishing effective water management practices are necessary to protect the integrity of water ecosystems both for current and for future generations. The plans of a new water initiative in the area are to span political boundaries and unite the Prairie Provinces in a joint statement of expectations for water security across the region.

The Prairie Provinces share a critical river basin that spans from the headwaters of the Saskatchewan River system in the Rocky Mountains to the rivers that flow through Alberta, Saskatchewan and into Manitoba as they reach their destination in Lake Winnipeg. What happens upstream in the system impacts downstream communities, uses and activities. We are entering into a time of increased pressure on water resources across the Prairie Provinces and climate forecasts are sending signals that suggest, even despite other pressures, water resources may become scarce in certain regions in the future.

Currently, each of the Prairie Provinces has substantial differences in water law and policy. The primary communication on interjurisdictional water management across the three provinces falls under the auspices of the Prairie Provinces water board (PPWB).

The board, formed in 1948, was originally tasked with monitoring the implementation of allocation agreements made between the three provinces. This agreement, still in place today, requires Alberta to pass along 50% of natural flows to Saskatchewan who in turn must pass along 50% of their natural flows on to Manitoba. In recent years the board's mandate has been broadened to start addressing water quality and groundwater concerns.

A people's statement on water management

Does the water allocation agreement made between the three provinces in the 1940s even hold true given today's knowledge and public desires for ecological preservation? Collectively, across borders, our communities need to share in decision-making to ensure that our shared water resources are clean and healthy now and into the future. We need to have safe water to drink. We can ensure that upstream users consider the effects of those living downstream. As communities, we decide what water uses we prioritize.

The Prairie Provinces Statement of Expectation for Water Sustainability will engage citizen groups, non-governmental organizations, First Nations and academia in a people's statement on effective water management in the region. Over the course of the next 8 months the team will work alongside interested citizens, community groups, NGOs and First Nations to unite a truly inter-provincial network to protect our shared water.

For more information contact Lindsay Telfer with the Sierra Club of Canada's Prairie Chapter at Lindsay@sierraclub.ca or by calling 780-439-1160.

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Poplar River First Nation Lands Wait for Permanent Protection Poplar-Nanowin Rivers Park Reserve

Submitted by Gaile Whelan Enns, Director, Manitoba Wildlands

Poplar River First Nation (PRFN) may be close to securing permanent protection for the 800,000 ha Poplar-Nanowin Rivers Park Reserve, which has had interim protection from development since 1999 under a Parks Act regulation. The First Nation nominated these boreal lands for protection in 1998, under Manitoba's First Nation Protected Areas Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The Asatiwisiipe Aki Lands Management Plan was completed in fall 2005 and presented to the Manitoba Government. Poplar River's lands plan is the result of close to a decade of research, traditional use studies, mapping, archeology and other technical studies. The community also launched a website containing information about their lands plan, and their vision for the future protection and management of their traditional lands. The website posts news and correspondence to showcase their efforts to negotiate with the Government of Manitoba for permanent protection for their traditional lands. In March 2006, Poplar River sent a renewed, formal written request for permanent protection for these important boreal lands to Manitoba's Conservation Minister and the Premier.

The lands within the Asatiwisiipe Aki Protected Area are an intact Boreal ecosystem where natural processes such as fire, wind and insects as well as climate determine species' cycles as well as the functioning of the ecosystem. Due to its large size and intactness, this protected boreal forest provides ecological services that benefit Poplar River First Nation members, Manitobans and the world. Clean water through water filtration, clean air through oxygen production and carbon storage through absorption of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere into the soil, trees, and water systems are some of the ecological services provided by these boreal lands and waters.

First lands protected for the World Heritage Site

There is added significance to the boreal lands within the Asatiwisiipe Aki Protected Area because of Poplar River's plans to keep them intact. They will also be the first lands protected for the World Heritage Site (WHS) planned for the region. The WHS was nominated by PRFN along with four neighbouring First Nations east of Lake Winnipeg as part of their 2002 Accord. Their undertaking commits them to support one another and work together in a shared vision of protecting and conserving the ancestral lands and resources of their respective First Nations. Poplar River is the first of the Accord First Nations in Manitoba to complete its lands management plan. Permanent protection of these Manitoba boreal lands is critical for implementation of their lands plan, as well as achieving UNESCO inscription for the proposed World Heritage Site. Both Canada and Manitoba support the nomination of this future boreal WHS.

Gaile Whelan Enns, director of Manitoba Wildlands, told EcoJournal, "Our government will have taken an important step for the east side boreal region, for the future of the boreal in Canada, and for the World Heritage Site when it answers Poplar River First Nation's request. We are looking forward to congratulating all parties!"



Courtesy Poplar River First Nations

Poplar River's vision and plan for its traditional lands is supported in the US by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), in partnership with Manitoba Wildlands. "The Poplar/Nanowin River Park Reserve is an irreplaceable part of the world's unspoiled, intact boreal forest ecosystem," said Susan Casey-Lefkowitz, Director NRDC Canada Program. "The international community cannot understand why Manitoba delays in keeping its commitment to permanently protect this region."

The NRDC's BioGems campaign includes Poplar River's lands within its 'Heart of the Boreal Forest' BioGem. The current 'Take Action' opportunity for BioGems supporters is an appeal to the Manitoba Government to act on its commitment to permanently protect Poplar

River First Nations traditional lands.

2007 is looking more promising for the fulfillment of PRFN's vision of permanent protection for these boreal lands.

Further reading:

- 1 Poplar River First Nation's Asatiwisiipe Aki Lands Management Plan, http://www.poplarriverfirstnation.ca/poplar_river_land.htm
- 2 Poplar River First Nation's March 2006 letter, formally requesting permanent protection for the Poplar/Nanowin Rivers Park Reserve, <http://www.poplarriverfirstnation.ca/docs/PRFNStruthers28Mar06.pdf>
- 3 NRDC's 'Heart of the Boreal Forest' BioGem ('Take Action' in support of permanently protecting the Poplar/Nanowin River Park), <http://www.savebiogems.org/boreal/>
- 4 The Government of Manitoba's commitment to the "goal of permanently designating five new, major protected areas by 2010", http://www.gov.mb.ca/greenandgrowing/natural_areas.html
- 5 The listing of Manitoba government commitments to the World Heritage Site and for further info, http://manitobawildlands.org/lup_whs.htm
- 6 News items and more information about Manitoba's east side, <http://www.manitobawildlands.org>

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100 Mile Manitoba

By Paul Chorney

Why would Manitobans choose to eat only food grown within 100 miles for 100 days?

Kelly is a young woman who wants to support local farmers, and to learn more about self-reliance and growing her own food. Dan, who works in the area of global food justice, sees eating locally as an opportunity to show solidarity with those who often have no choices about the foods that are available to them. Vi likes the challenge of becoming aware of what's involved in eating locally, and wants to learn more about the impact she's having on the environment. Anna has been spending a lot of time and energy to develop a more sustainable lifestyle. She sees the food system as a large part of a sustainable life, and wants to address that. For Heather, where her food comes from is very much related to her environment, but also to her relationship with others and to her own spirituality.

Kelly, Dan, Vi, Anna and Heather are among the 80 Manitobans who have currently pledged to eat food grown within 100 miles of their home for 100 days beginning September 1. The goal for 100 Mile Manitoba is for at least 100 Manitobans to make that pledge. Most who have pledged live in Winnipeg, but participants include those who live in Emerson, Boissevain, Carman, La Broquerie, Portage La Prairie and Belair.

The 100 milers are pledging an action for themselves personally, but the goal of 100 Mile Manitoba is also to raise awareness in the larger community about the benefits of eating locally. The hope is to build stronger links between those who

live and consume within the perimeter of Winnipeg and the rural agricultural community. A food sourcing group is searching for 100 mile sources, but also reaching out to grocers and restaurants asking them to support local food choices and to promote 100 mile meals and ingredients.

Learning how to preserve and store food

Those who have pledged want to know more about where their food is coming from, but also how to preserve and store food. An education group is planning a series of workshops that will include canning and drying methods, cold storage techniques, and possibly soy milk and tofu production.

The 100 mile diet and 100 Mile Manitoba are both examples of the increasing interest in supporting a local food system. The phrase "Local is the new Organic" and a recent Time magazine cover story, "Forget Organic Eat Local" testify to the trend.

As organic enters the mainstream, with Wal Mart becoming the largest organic retailer, with certified organic food often traveling large distances, and more organic 'junk food' being produced, those whose interests include supporting the family farm and healthy, environmentally sustainable food are becoming passionate about the local food system.

There are certainly challenges to eating a 100 mile diet in Manitoba, and one of the ongoing discussions among the group has been to what extent this is completely possible. For example, salt is needed in our diets, and there is no salt produced within 100 miles of Winnipeg. Jason, a 100 mile participant, decided to do some research on salt and discovered that the closest salt is produced in Saskatchewan, and the consumer can actually find a code on the box that indicates whether it has come from Saskatchewan or a further distance.

So, do 100 milers eat salt or spices from distant lands? The advice being offered to those who pledge is that each person makes his or her own decision about how stringently to follow the diet. Following the diet as a group allows for support, bulk buying, trading of foods, and the sharing of information.

When 100 milers approach restaurants asking that they feature a 100 mile meal selection for a week during the 100 day period, how do they deal with salt and spices that the chef may wish to use? The consensus at the last meeting is that transparency is the key. Knowing what ingredients may not be available nearby is good information.

A broader question is the ongoing long term impact of 100 mile thinking. The interest of most participants is not in being restrictive, but rather supporting and celebrating the creation of a vibrant local Manitoba food system. The 100 mile diet is a particularly challenging and dramatic way to draw attention to ways that individuals can make personal changes in eating, and also the policy and infrastructure changes needed to help create a just and sustainable food system in Manitoba.

For more information about 100 Mile Manitoba, and for links to other 100 mile and local food initiatives, visit www.100milemanitoba.org.

Paul Chorney is the Urban Liaison for the Manitoba Food Charter, and a 100 Mile Manitoba participant.



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Bike to the Future

By Jackie Avent

Imagine this scene in the not too distant future: A middle-aged man rides his bicycle along Donald Street towards downtown. He is riding on the newly paved designated bike lane separated from the rest of traffic by a wide curb painted bright yellow for visibility. It's early spring, and it snowed a heavy sticky snow the night before. Thankfully, the bike lane has been plowed before the street, leaving him able to pass by the string of single occupancy vehicles tied up by the deep and slushy snow in the driving lanes.

When he comes to the red light at River Avenue, he is thankful for the opportunity to catch his breath before the gradual climb over the Midtown bridge. Beside him, a woman pulling a bicycle trailer with a bundled toddler stops too, and they share pleasantries about the weather and longer days.

Although the marked bicycle route is no longer physically separated by a curb when it goes over the bridge, the lines have been repainted to give the cyclists more room to manoeuvre around the curb lane. The public education "share-the-road" campaigns and the emphasis on cycling in Manitoba driver's education classes have increased the awareness of cycling in the city, so as the cyclist crosses the bridge the cars that pass give him a wide berth.

Cyclists become a priority

Just on the other side of Broadway he turns into the back lane and stops behind his workplace where his employer has just installed a bike cage due to the increased number of employees that are cycling to work. He secures his bike and, panniers in hand, ascends the elevator. As he gets ready for his day, he is already looking forward to the ride home. As a cyclist, the time on his bike before and after work are his favourite times of the day.

Sound too good to be true, especially here in Winnipeg?

A group of committed and energetic Winnipeggers would like

to make this a reality. Bike to the Future, a non-profit organization started after summer 2006's intense focus on cycling, is a voluntary, inclusive group of concerned cyclists working to make cycling in Winnipeg a safe, enjoyable, accessible and convenient transportation choice year-round. Those involved envision a city where cycling is embraced as the preferred mode of transportation, where cycling is integrated into urban design and planning, and where Winnipeg is recognized as a leader in cycling infrastructure and programs.

The formalized organization came out of the Bike to the Future Forum held on Wednesday September 20th, 2006 at the University of Winnipeg. Over 100 Winnipeg cyclists came together to discuss their vision for cycling in Winnipeg and to share their ideas about what is needed to make cycling better and safer in our city. The evening was organized in two parts—the first where the participants had the opportunity to hear presentations about Cycling in other Canadian Cities, the City of Winnipeg's

Parkway System, and the City of Winnipeg's Active Transportation study. The second half of the evening was participatory in nature and provided working stations where attendees could discuss various issues about cycling in Winnipeg.

After the forum, the municipal election provided an ideal opportunity to raise the awareness of cycling in the City of Winnipeg. Bike to the Future created a questionnaire that was distributed to all municipal candidates asking for their vision of cycling in the city and what they were going to do to improve infrastructure for commuter cyclists in Winnipeg. This process helped Winnipeg cyclists to be named "Most Effective Lobby Group" during the election.

An ambitious agenda over the coming year

Since the civic election, Bike to the Future has been busy meeting with city and provincial leaders to advance recommendations made in the Bike to the Future Forum Report and getting organized to pursue an ambitious agenda over the coming year, including a membership drive and continued advocacy for infrastructure improvements. The organization has also been a strong participant in trail-development groups for Marconi (new trail in River East—Transcona), WinSmart (new trail phase one from Forks to Pembina), and Bishop Grandin Greenway



Winnipeg cyclists rode to raise awareness during the fall civic election. Photo by Ian Mauro

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