



TOWARDS DIVERSIFICATION OF PRAIRIE AGRICULTURE ORGANIC CERTIFICATION IN CANADA

by Manon-Soleil

As the quality and health of our food and our environment are becoming growing concerns among people all over the world, so is the topic of organic agriculture. A good reflection of this in the Canadian context is COAB's (Canadian Organic Advisory Board) present efforts to create and establish guidelines for organic certification across the country.

The realm of ecological agriculture is a wide and complex one, as evidenced by the broad spectrum of opinions surrounding the issue. Many people say that it is insignificant in the scheme of national and international food production, whereas others believe that it is a strong, steadily growing trend. Doctor Prentice of the University of Manitoba's Transportation Institute sees organic farming as 'a nice niche market', and no more. According to Prentice, recent freight subsidy cuts as well as changing technology, namely the efficiency of large trucks and elevators, are chiefly responsible for the changing and shaping of agriculture trends in Canada. Furthermore, a move towards diversification was already in place before the removal of grain transportation subsidies, although the latter has certainly acted as incentive to encourage more hog farms, potato processing and perhaps even more organic farming to come into the scene.

Alex Scott, a former president of COAB as well as a longtime farmer, describes organic agriculture as 'not huge relative to the

conventional market in that we (Canada) are an exporting country. Although we are very small players still, over half of what we produce (organically) is exported". Other important aspects also need to be considered to get the big picture. The following brief

interview with Alex Scott explores some of the issues regarding COAB guidelines and the move towards organic certification, as well as the consequences for Canadians and other nations.

Eco-Journal: Why is this standardization of organic products important? Will it be better or worse for local producers?

Alex Scott: Standardization is more important as organic produce is becoming more in demand. There has to be trust, which locally is built through personal relationships, but requires a more formal approach or shape as the picture gets bigger. Thus standardization is especially important in supermarkets and in the global market.

Trade of organic produce is pick-

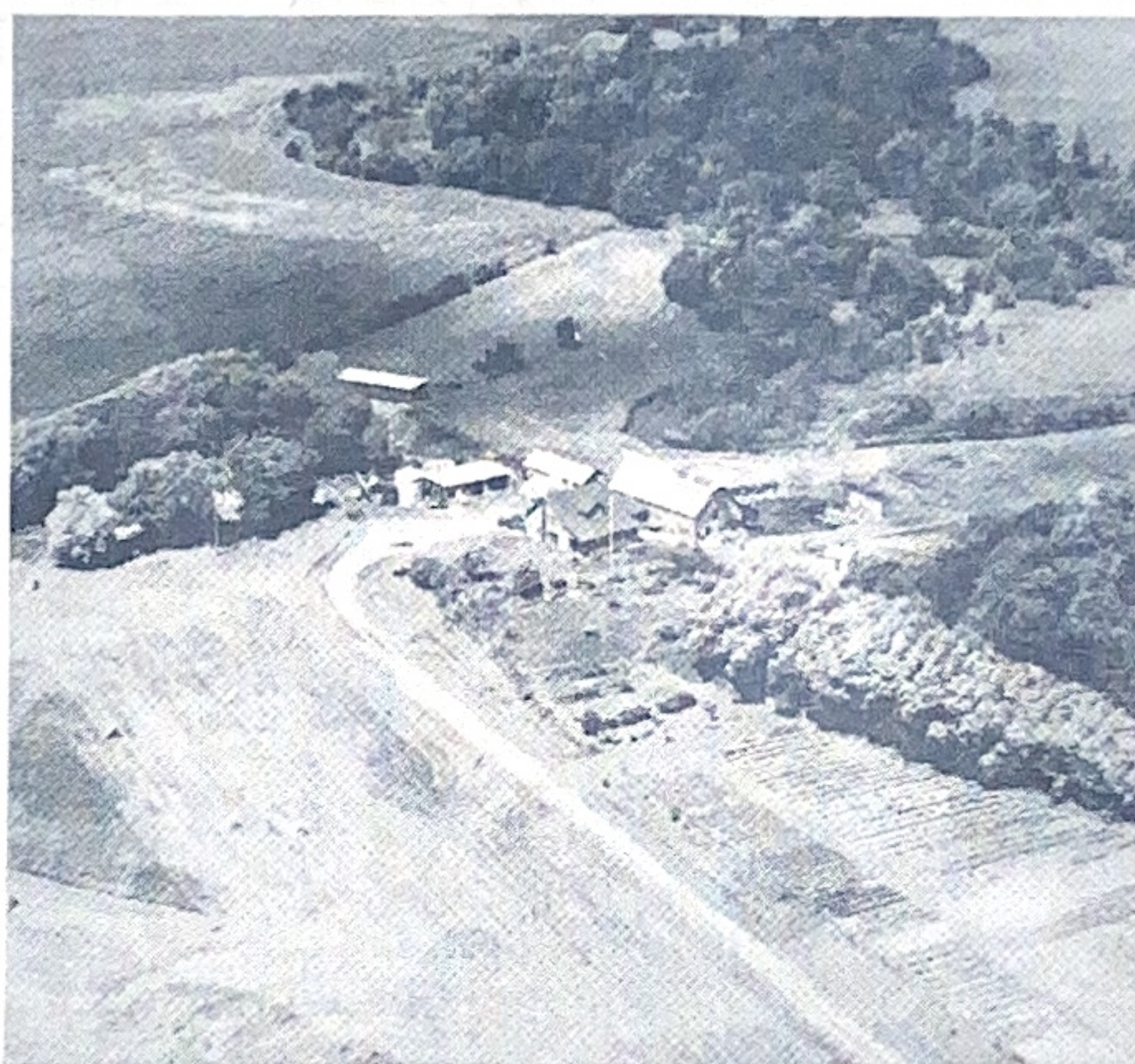
ing up very strongly internationally, particularly in Western Europe, and these countries are demanding accountability. Additionally, more demand is seeing power structures emerge. Standardization would also be helpful for levelling the playing field to eliminate some of the problems.

As for the local producers, hopefully they won't be affected. We are still debating whether or not a local organic producer's goods should be standardized if selling at a local (i.e. within province) supermarket. I think that as a first step, consumers have to beware and be further educated about where their food is coming from.

The standardization goal of COAB is to establish a 'Canada Organic' stamp, designating fully qualified, certified organic products of Canada. The process involves three main points:

- 1) Everyone accredited will have this stamp.

See VALUE page 11



Kelly and Gerry Dube's organic mixed farm near La Broquerie

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YOUTH CAUCUS LAUNCHES PESTICIDE/HERBICIDE REDUCTION CAMPAIGN, HOSTS PRAIRIE SUSTAINABILITY CAMP

by Sacha Kopelow, Ecotopia Co-ordinator

MENYC, the Manitoba Eco-Network's
Youth Caucus, is hosting one of two Prairie
coordinators of the CEN Youth Sustainabil-
ity Project this year, who will be working
out of the Eco-Network/RCM office.

The YSP project will culminate in a
sustainability/youth capacity-building camp
in June of 1997. The prairie region (MB,
SK, & AB) initiative will be an intensive and
hands-on campaign (C.L.E.A.N.-Clean
Lawn Environmental Action) to reduce/
eliminate the use of pesticides and herbi-
cides on specific schoolgrounds and their
surrounding communities across our region.
Included in this endeavor will be forages
into biodiversity issues using indigenous/
low-care groundcover, restoring habitat, and
experimenting with natural alternatives in
weed and pest control. We will also focus on
making long-lasting links between youth
and local community/environmental organi-
zations.

Winnipeg will host a nine-day camp in
June, where 15 participants from across the
Prairies will participate in skill-building
workshops, learn about sustainability, vol-
unteer with local groups, and work with
local schools to canvass their areas, raising
awareness about lawn care concerns and
alternatives. These participants will then

return to their own communities to replicate
the project at home.

What can you do?

- Volunteer with the MENYC organizing committee to help research, conduct community surveys, strategize, dialogue with policy-makers, or plan the camp.
- Send in a tax-deductible donation (make cheques out to Manitoba Eco-Network, and indicate that your donation is for this project).
- Ask your local school to become involved.
- NGOs are asked to send in endorsement letters.

MENYC would like to thank all those
who are supporting this initiative, especially
the Manitoba Eco-Network for their
mentorship and technical support, and Re-
source Conservation Manitoba for their do-
nation of office space.

Contact the Youth Sustainability Project at:

Ecotopia Coordinator, YSP Prairie Region
C.L.E.A.N. (Clean Lawn Environmental
Action) Project

2-70 Albert Street, Winnipeg, MB R3B 1E7

Phone: (204) 475-8306

Fax: (204) 947-6514

Email: skopelow@callisto.uwinnipeg.ca

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PESTICIDE DRIFT: WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

by Meaghan Moon and David Kattenburg

Problem Pesticides Manitoba is a Carman-based group concerned about the health and environmental effects of accidental exposure to pesticides and pesticide drift. One concern voiced at Problem Pesticide meetings is of the possible discrepancy between the number of official reports of accidental exposure to drift and the number of unreported incidents. The Community Animation Project is helping to fill this gap by facilitating a series of workshops designed to elicit stories of accidental exposure to pesticides. The CAP-facilitated workshops are being carried out in collaboration with the Manitoba Eco-Network's Rural Outreach Program, with financial support from Manitoba Hydro.

The first in the series was held on January 25 in Carberry. The nine participants had varying backgrounds and interests. There were town residents, farming people and researchers present. Several participants spoke of instances where they, or members of their immediate families, had been accidentally sprayed by aerial sprayers. No one had filed an official report regarding these incidents.

All participants agreed that the level of spraying, particularly aerial spraying, was troublesome. Some participants discussed the health problems they encountered during spraying season. Concern was also expressed about possible water contamination, the licensing of aerial application of Round-up, aerial accidents involving spray planes and the health effects on children of municipal pesticide use. Several participants expressed interest in networking with Problem Pesticides Manitoba.

Announcements of a second workshop in Dauphin on March 7 elicited phone calls of interest, but no one showed up to share their stories. ECJ

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Come to Manitoba Eco-Network's Earth Day Celebration: An evening of Nature Readings on Sunday April 20 from 7 to 9pm. The Fat Angel Bistro is generously providing the venue. David Arnason, Jake MacDonald, Barb Schott and other Manitoba writers will provide the readings. This event is open to the public, so tell your friends. Cover charge is \$5.00, proceeds to the Eco-Network Resource Centre. Meals, snacks and refreshments available for purchase. Phone 947-6511 for further information. This event will be smoke-free. ECJ

Special thanks are due to Daniel McKay, who has volunteered his skills and services in the layout of this issue.

THE FINE ART OF MANITOBA'S WILDERNESS

The Eco-Network, along with Resource Conservation Manitoba and the Manitoba Future Forest Alliance, is co-sponsoring this exciting new project to combine art and the preservation of endangered wilderness in Manitoba. Renowned landscape photographer, Marek Zaleski, has been commissioned to produce a set of photographic images of special places in various parts of Manitoba. The fine art prints will go on display around the province, and limited edition sets of the prints will be available for sale. The ultimate goal of the project is to increase public awareness about treasured and vital places right here in Manitoba, places that many people will never see in person.

In Phase 2 of the project, the plan is to utilize the images in the production of products such as calendars, posters and date books as a fundraising tool for the participating organizations' educational work related to wilderness.

For more information about this project, please call Don Sullivan at 947-4081. ECJ

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WHAT'S HAPPENING...

Tuesday, April 15, 7:00pm. Coalition to Save the Elms presents "Backyard Biodiversity" workshop with Ted McLachlan. 2799 Roblin Blvd. For more info: 832-7188.

Sunday, April 20, 7 to 9pm. Manitoba Eco-Network presents "Home Ground", an evening of Nature Readings from Manitoba writers. Fat Angel, 220 Main Street. \$5 cover charge, proceeds to our Environmental Resource Centre. For more info: 947-6511.

April 27, Earth Day at The Forks. Info: 946-5315.

Wednesday, April 30. Community Economic Development Seminar: "Financing CED Enterprises" with Marty Donkervoort and LeVan Hall. Mondragon, 91 Albert St. More info: 958-8756.

Saturday, May 3. "The Day of Action" A march from Vimy Ridge Park to Sargent Park Arena. 11am to 4pm. "Demand Jobs! An End to Attacks on Our Services!" Bring banners, family and friends for entertainment, speakers, food and fun. More info. Winnipeg Labour Council 942-0522.

Saturday, May 10. Riding Mountain Centre for Environmental Studies. Workshops on: "Growing with Wildflowers" (morning) and "Basics of Organic Gardening" (afternoon) at Riding Mountain National Park. Registration is \$20 for each session or \$35 for both. More info: (204) 848-7284.

Monday, May 12 to May 15. Model Forest Network Symposium: "People Growing with Forests". Lombard Hotel, Winnipeg. A showcase of Model Forest activities, research and accomplishments from across the network. Call Manitoba Model Forest at (204) 367-5232 for more info.

Tuesday, May 13, 7:00pm. Coalition to Save the Elms workshop on "Backyard Pruning" (entails hands-on participation, so dress appropriately). 2799 Roblin Blvd. More info: 832-7188.

Saturday, May 24. Riding Mountain Centre for Environmental Studies. "Spring Birding in Riding Mountain National Park", with Cal Cuthbert. \$35. More info: 204 848-7284.

Thursday, May 29. Manitoba Eco-Network Annual General Meeting. 7pm, 2nd Floor, 70 Albert St.

Friday, May 30 to Sunday, June 1. "Women and Wolves Weekend" a women-only workshop on the ecology of wolves, at Riding Mountain National Park. Cost is \$100, includes field trips, info. sessions, accomodation and meals. Contact Sarah Goldstein at (204) 755-3438.

Friday, May 2. Project Peacemakers Annual Eco-Friendly dinner. Call 775-8178 for details and cost.

Saturday, June 7, starting at 10am. Save Our Seine Residents Committee Annual Greening. (see article on page 6). More info: 233-0294.

Tuesday, June 10. Coalition to Save the Elms. "Backyard Elm Survival Part 1" Classroom instruction on the care of elms in your backyard and around your neighbourhood. Robert A. Steen Community Centre, 780 Palmerston. More info: 832-7188.

Saturday, June 14. Peace Walk - Give Peace a Dance! Starts at the Legislative Building at noon. Walk is to Portage Ave. and back to the Leg. Call Project Peacemakers at 775-8178 for info.

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HORMONE HAVOC

by Val Paape

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I remember myself as a preschooler watching my father spray the screen windows of our home with DDT. The memory is so vivid that it even includes the smell. It was the late 40's, the heyday of post-WWII chemical use, and my father's favorite motto was: "If a little bit is good, a lot more must be better." Five decades later, I wonder what role DDT exposure played in my life, first as a developing child and then in my health as an adult.

Last October, Theo Colburn, senior scientist with the World Wildlife Fund and co-author of the recent book *Our Stolen Future*, met with Federal Environment Minister Sergio Marchi to argue that government and industry should change the way they assess the risk of synthetic chemicals to wildlife and humans. Synthetic chemicals such as pesticides (DDT, Malathion, Carbaryl), organochlorines (Dioxins, PCBs) and plasticizers and surfactants (polycarbonates, styrenes, nonylphenols) are known to disrupt the action of hormones, especially estrogen. Hence they are referred to as hormone mimics. Because their accumulation in the environment has not been associated with significant increases in cancer in exposed adults, it has been assumed that they are not very harmful except in huge doses. Colburn argues that this is a dangerously narrow view. Recent scientific evidence is linking hormone disrupters to reproductive system disorders of various kinds including cancer, immune system suppression and attention disorders.

Our Stolen Future may well be the "Silent Spring" of the 90s. It is a well-researched, readable book that argues that we cannot be complacent about synthetic chemicals in the environment.

Plastics release chemicals

Breast cancer has increased one percent per year throughout the industrial world since WWII. Post-menopausal, estrogen-sensitive breast cancer has contributed the most to this increase. These increases are believed to be related to the presence of the high levels of estrogen mimics in the environment. DDT and a metabolic by-product, DDE have been found at high levels in breast tumors. Dioxin and PCBs are causing reproductive havoc among many animals and as the endocrine system is remarkably similar in animals and humans, animal problems are likely predictive of human problems. Adults do not show higher incidences of cancer with exposure to these chemicals but fetuses and very young children are the future victims. High levels of estrogen mimics *in utero* may set in motion the events leading to a life beset with attention disorders, suppressed immune systems or even cancer of the reproductive organs.

Avoiding contact (and consumption) of hormone disrupters is difficult. *Vegetarian Times* makes these suggestions: eat organically grown vegetarian food; do not use chemical lawn care products to kill weeds as they contain a dioxin which mimics estrogen; don't use chlorine-bleached paper products as their incineration releases

Vegetarian Times makes these suggestions: eat organically grown vegetarian food; do not use chemical lawn care products to kill weeds as they contain a dioxin which mimics estrogen; don't use chlorine-bleached paper products as their incineration releases dioxins; avoid using plastic containers and wraps.

dioxins; avoid using plastic containers and wraps. This last suggestion results from research in the USA demonstrating that plastic laboratory equipment emitted enough estrogen mimicking chemicals into cultures of breast cancer cells to make them grow at phenomenally rapid rates. The researchers found that plastic containers previously considered to be inert would release these chemicals into such neutral substances such as water. As plastic manufacturers are not about to advertise their formulas, the public has no way of knowing what brands or what types of containers contain hormone mimics in their chemical make-up.

While environmental organizations such as Greenpeace and the World Wildlife Fund are busy exposing links between synthetic chemicals and animal and human health, medical research, including cancer research, has typically ignored this area. Research being conducted by Dr. Kristen Aronson of Queens University into the relationship of organochlorines in the environment and breast cancer is a welcome change from this pattern. Along with environmentalists, breast cancer survivors and advocates are instrumental in turning the tide of research. WEED (Women, Environment, Education and Development), an activist

See ENVIRONMENTAL page 11

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ROOTING FOR CANADA AT

by JP Brunet

Mountain climbing on the Seine and other stories

My 11-year old son celebrated his birthday in early March. Instead of going to Chuck E Cheese, he and his buddies decided they would mountain-climb on the Seine. This meant crawling your way to the top of the steepest bank you could find, then in an avalanche of snow burying others as you came sliding down. That they spent a full three hours doing this is a credit to the imagination and energy of 11-year olds and the balmy weather that prevailed. Eventually, even Arnold Schwarzenegger somehow got involved. For me, watching them play was a total flashback.

One of the most vivid memories of my childhood growing up in Windsor Park were our winter forays into Windsor Park Golf Course. Here, the frozen forest and river of the golf course held all the mystique and the richness of the Amazon. For us, it was Zorro and not Arnold that lurked behind every tree. While the scenario may have changed, nature still provides the backdrop that allows young minds to run free.

Nature and kids have always mixed this way. To give a kid a wild space is like giving him a rink to skate on. It stretches body, mind and spirit. People in cities lucky enough to live by the rare patches of urban wilderness intuitively know this. It is probably one of the unstated motivations behind the movements to preserve the Seine, the LaSalle, Bruce Park, Omand's and Bunn's Creek and the other

pockets of forests and wilderness that have somehow managed to survive the urban sprawl.

Adults, as much as kids, need to make contact with Nature. To remind ourselves that not all is rectangular and square, asphalt and cement. To allow our minds to travel along other than the straight lines our automobiles must travel. That despite our intrusive meddling, the much more supple geometry of nature is still able to sustain an incredible repertory of life. In fewer words, we need to be humbled, to be awed. It is largely for these reasons that volunteers show up at greening events. On June 7th of this year, SOS is fortunate to be reminded that the singular act of planting a tree, can go far beyond improving a neighbourhood.

Rooting for the not-so-small potatoes of national unity

SOS will be joined this year by the "Let's Root for Canada" - Youth, Unity and the Environment Youth Ambassadors of the Canada Tree Foundation. Representing each province and territory, this delegation of youth will make its way across the country and participate in community greening and cultural events.

This national tree-planting campaign has been designed to remind Canadians of the 500th anniversary of John Cabot's arrival in Newfoundland. It would be another 300 years before the west was opened to the European fur trade, building on the toehold established by the de Meuron regiment and the Catholic Missions that settled by the Seine. The Seine oozes with both nature and history - a tribute to the role rivers played in our past.

I am reminded of this as SOS prepares its annual greening by the banks of Seine on the Lagimodiere - Gaboury homestead (former Market Garden site, just north of Provencher). Jean-Baptiste and Marie-Anne were the first Canadian pioneer couple to settle west of the Great Lakes. Defying the tradition of the day, Marie-Anne followed her voyageur husband and became the first (white) woman of European descent in the West. Remembered for his 1300 mile winter trek to Montreal to alert Lord Selkirk of the difficulties faced by the early Red River Settlement, Jean-Baptiste became Canada's most celebrated voyageur.

They were also the grandparents of Louis Riel, who is thought to have been born here. Louis Riel's father, the "miller of the Seine", operated the first carding mill in Western Canada in this area of the Seine. The area is so steeped in history that in the hope of satisfying the 'in situ' requirements of the National Historic Sites Board of Canada, an archaeological survey might be required prior to our planting.

Planned sometime during the day, will be a commemorative ceremony where each delegation will plant a tree in a specially prepared bed as a symbol of national unity. A humorist of the mind of Stephen Leacock would no doubt find in this situation an inspiration for comedy:

B.C., no sooner done, would start up their chainsaws. "No B.C. - you have to let the thing GROW first, before you cut it down."

Alberta would dig, dig, dig for that other resource that flows so profusely beneath their soil. Saskatchewan would promptly fill

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SOS'S ANNUAL GREENING

every pothole and puddle in sight to make way for more grain. Ontario, too busy tending to the nation's business, would have contracted the job to some poorer province. Quebec, of course, would insist on its own separate bed in order to flourish. Newfoundland would have to be gently reminded that the green end is planted up. (Teasing my sisters to the point of exasperation, my mother would often state that teasing was really a form of affection. If this is the case, Canada is *truly in love* with Newfoundland).

It is not my intention to make light of the serious purpose of our young ambassadors. Rather, the above skit only serves to demonstrate the importance of their mission.

We Canadians have become a cantankerous bunch that have grown dangerously apart. We have lost that tenuous link that is provided by the land and our past. Nationalism has been reduced to petty regionalism. In the interest of the neighbourhood, we have lost sight of the forest for the trees.

A lot of this has to do with the distances and differences that divide us. Oddly enough, it is the differences that define us. Ten perfectly cloned copies of Uncle Bob seated at the table, would not make for great dinner conversation. Nature favours diversity. It is never boring at what it does. Yet, diversity can only thrive if it is part of a greater whole. Respecting both the tree and the forest is not an easy thing. But it is what Canadians must learn to do if we want to remain together.

Rooting for the future

If the ghost of Lagimodiere were to show up at our event, in all likelihood he wouldn't understand the purpose of our greening. For him, as most pioneers, nature was an enemy, something to be conquered. This is easy enough to understand. Adversity in the form of frosts, fires, floods, rodents, grasshoppers and weeds threatened crops and seriously jeopardized the prospect of survival. He would marvel at the concept and modern convenience of bagged salads purchased at a local Safeway any time of the year. He would think that this company must surely employ armies of voyageurs. Largely because of technology and the fact that we no longer need to wrestle with nature to scratch out a living, our perception of nature has accordingly changed.

In the fifties and sixties entire forests were levelled to make room for urban development in Windsor Park and Southdale. In a recent ad on its Royal Wood development in Winnipeg's south, Ladco pitches that, *'Nature's calling you home - a place you can live surrounded by the beauty and serenity of nature'*. What has shifted, slowly but steadily, is the way we view nature. Nature, so rare in urban centres, has now become a marketable aesthetic asset. What must be remembered, is that we, rather than previous generations, have the luxury of appreciating it.

Forests and wilderness offer more than beauty and aesthetics. A recent report from the World Resources Institute states that only 20% of the world's original forests remain, most of these in the northern confines of Canada and Russia, and the rain forests of the Amazon. Unless we believe that the future alchemists of technology

will be able to genetically transform human lungs into the gills of fish, the thought of the future leaves one gasping for air. The fur trade, the buffalo hunt, the current problems faced by the fishing industries all underscore the fact that nature has its own bottom-line!

Canada with its abundance of natural resources is the envy of the world. Within a model of sustainability, Canada must exhibit a sense of responsibility and stewardship that is at least equal to the wealth of its natural resources. The kids from the *"Let's Root for Canada"* tour will no doubt go a long way in getting this message across to Canadians.

If we value the future, there is no choice but the wise and thoughtful management of our resources. Like the rich beauty of wood in that hardwood floor that lies hidden beneath the carpet, Canada has every opportunity to become a gleaming example of this to the rest of the world. How easy it is to plant a tree. How much harder it is to plant an ideal for the rest of the world to follow.

June 7th, starting at 10 am, *Save Our Seine* will be greening the banks of the Seine off of Thibault Street north of Provencher. Students of Vincent Massey will work on the East side of the Seine just north of John Bruce Road. As in the past, the Voyageurs and their canoes will lend some local colour and allow participants to discover some of the beauty of the Seine. At around 3 pm both groups will converge at Fort Gibraltar in Whittier Park for another planting. A bonfire and a picnic is planned to wrap up the day's activities. For more information, please call 233-0294. **ECJ**

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HERITAGE SURVEYS

by Lindy Clubb

Virginia Petch of Northern Lights Heritage Surveys has a long history of research and Traditional Ecological Knowledge gathering in northern native communities. You can find her canoeing down the Seal River, transecting a site before a dig, or making tea for an elder any time of the year. Much of Petch's work involves heritage resources impact assessments for utility companies such as Manitoba Hydro and Centra Gas. While companies such as these voluntarily set high standards for rigorous examinations, forestry operations daintily avoid more than an afternoon's workshop on the subject. The result? All over the province, out of ignorance, timber crews destroy valuable cultural sites and features.

We have twenty thousand years of unexplored history in our province. I recently held the heavy fossilized skull of a buffalo in my hands. It was 2000 years of age. It sent shivers down my spine. My father and grandfather collected and mounted arrowheads they found while farming. We treasure them. Too many culturally meaningful articles have been lost already. A man I know with a glass bookcase filled with artifacts from the banks of the Winnipeg River at

Sagkeeng considers them private property. And so he should. It was his personal interest that kept him exploring. However, a larger public interest is at stake.

Ownership of artifacts is an issue that people like Petch respect but protection can only come after discovery. Often overlooked, human-made objects and alterations left less damage and less visible marks to the land than roads or clearcuts. Cultural features include weirs for fishing,



petroforms and pictographs, thunderbird nests (circles of rocks used for religious practises by Ojibwa and Saulteaux people), entrenchments and gravesites, and culturally modified trees such as maples tapped for syrup and birches with bark removed for biting material (artwork). Natural features are often an indicator. For example, between the Red Deer River and Lake Dauphin, Petch found places where salt springs provided brine for an early form of salt trade, where excess sediment was shipped in birchbark containers for settlements to use. These containers are now on exhibit.

It's hard to imagine these discoveries being made during the pre-harvest surveys conducted by Louisiana Pacific. But a long term study could be put in place in the Forest Management areas of the province. Archaeological surveys and assessments would give us historic and pre-historic information and accompanying artifacts, putting students and teachers alike to work on recognizing our own history. However, this process isn't being applied to forestry operations. Environmental Impact Statements, Annual Operating Plans and the Technical Advisory Committees that oversee require-

ments are choosing the minimum plan: an afternoon's workshop for introductory training.

The Association of Manitoba Archaeologists (seeing the distinct possibility that the Manitoba Model Forest will follow the pattern established by the forestry companies) is worried enough about standards to have sent a letter to Gary Dickson of the Historic Resources Branch, calling for better practices. "Until recently, the Manitoba Model Forest has ignored the inclusion of archaeology in its general plan, and the AMA is concerned that now, with some interest being shown, the approach to archaeology and cultural resource management will follow that which has been developed for L.P. and Repap. This approach is not considered satisfactory... We would also like to remind you that workshops geared to artifact identification do not constitute cultural resource management... we recommend an approach with a solid research design and methodology that will set the standard for forest management in the province".

Meanwhile, as a volunteer, Virginia Petch has conducted over 20 classroom presentations promoting interest in heritage to schools and watching the children's eyes light up. She could come to your area if you call Betty Anne Kilbrie at 988-0669 (Innovators in the Classroom Program). And you could call Manitoba Model Forest to recommend they follow up on the interest shown during planning workshops with a comprehensive research design for a successful heritage project in their area. It's the least we can do to follow up on 20,000 years of resource activity before it's all lost. **ECJ**

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Community Economic Development Business Association Takes Root in Winnipeg

by Anne Lindsey

Last spring, when Russ Rothney started his new job as Community Development Co-ordinator for Assiniboine Credit Union here in Winnipeg, one of his plans was to facilitate the formation of a community economic development business association in this city. Discussions with the co-owners of Tall Grass Prairie Bakery (where locally and organically-grown grains are ground and baked into delicious and renowned breads and other goodies) led to the development of some concept notes, and thence, to some early meetings of this fledgling organization.

Rothney is no stranger to community economic development, having spent several years as the volunteer treasurer of Neechi Foods, a unique grocery store located in the heart of Winnipeg's inner city, in a predominantly aboriginal, and low income neighbourhood. Neechi (which means "friend" in Ojibway), an owner-operated co-op employs local people, both in the store itself, and in the production of moccasins, gloves and other original crafts which are marketed through the store. It features country foods such as (certified organic) wild rice and blueberries, harvested and processed by the aboriginal-run Kagiwiosa Co-op in North Western Ontario. And in season, the store carries a selection of locally produced organic vegetables and fruits.

An early decision made by the store was not to sell cigarettes. While it may have lost the store a few customers, Neechi felt that they did not want to support the disproportionately high health impacts that cigarettes have on the native population, and on low income people.

Instead of candy at "child's eye" level, the store displays an appetizing array of fruits, priced low enough for a child with some pocket change to afford. Freshly baked bannock, and locally harvested fish are other features of the store.

One of Neechi's goals is to keep cash circulating in the local economy, where it can employ local people, and assist in the social development of the community, one of the very basic tenets of community economic development (or ced). Rothney says "It seems to me that far too much of the work of progressive/humanitarian social movements by-passes the fundamental need to build socially conscious businesses and economic systems. How are we supposed to have a cooperative, peaceful world without a compatible economy?"

He continues, "What better way of stimulating a people-oriented, cooperative, sustainable economy than starting with businesses which already are doing it?" The businesses in Winnipeg's new association (they haven't yet settled on just the right name for it!) aren't just "socially conscious", they're environmentally-conscious as well, and for the most part, strongly connected with the social justice and eco-communities in Manitoba.

Harvest Collective is a good example. As Winnipeg's primary outlet for organically produced food, Harvest is a member-owned business, with opportunities for discounts in exchange for member labour. It carries local foods in season, and is an important market for locally processed items, such as organic jams and jellies from Simple Abundance, and bakery items from Tall Grass and Stone

Ground Daily Bread, another organic bakery. Harvest's co-chairperson (and Manitoba Eco-Network Board member), Steve Rauh, emphasizes that organic agricultural production is becoming more important than ever with the advent of information about the hormone disrupting effects of chemicals present in pesticides.

Humboldt's Legacy (formerly Green Earth) another association member, calls itself "North America's first environmental department store". It carries all manner of items for the careful shopper, from energy efficient light bulbs, to clothing and shoes made from recycled fibres, to biodegradable soaps and cleansers.

Owners, Kris and Willy Kurtz, believe in supporting fair trade co-ops and safe environmental practices, wherever purchases originate.

The new association aims to be a supportive network for ced practitioners, providing information and analysis on the challenge of combining market development with social goals, but also working together on areas such as training and operational systems, joint marketing, skill sharing, finance structures and so on. Other businesses including an accounting firm and Home Made Music (sprung from Winnipeg's famous annual Folk Festival) are getting involved. Assiniboine Credit Union, where Rothney works, is becoming ever more receptive to the needs and benefits of local ced type businesses, and is proving to be an important bastion of support in many cases.

Russ Rothney feels that the ced business association can play a very strategic role in Winnipeg. And locally, it seems, communities and our environment can only benefit.

ECJ

CEN AGA/Conference in Vancouver This Year

Mark your calendar and plan to attend the 1997 Canadian Environmental Network AGA/Conference this Spring. The dates are Friday, June 13th to Sunday, June 15th. Co-hosted by the BC Environmental Network, the conference is at the Belcarra YMCA (Camp Howdy) along the shore of Indian Arm (50 minutes from downtown Vancouver). It is a peaceful natural setting situated in forest by the ocean. This rustic and scenic surrounding with campfire sites, canoes and kayaks, in addition to our usual jam packed agenda, will certainly keep participants on the go for the entire weekend! Make sure to rest up before you get there!

There will also be a fundraising event with David Suzuki, national activists, and regional activists on the evening of Thursday, June 12th in Vancouver.

Stefan Ochman is the CEN AGA/Conference coordinator. He can be reached by email at stefano@island.net or via the BC Environmental Network office at (604) 879-2279. Hope you can join us!

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PROVINCE PLANS TO SELL OFF WINNIPEG BEACH LAKEFRONT

The provincial government is planning to sell off up to 22 acres of Winnipeg Beach Provincial Park (25 % of the total park area) for the development of upscale condominiums priced starting at \$100,000. Park supporters are eager to see the revitalization of Winnipeg Beach, but point to the fact that some 60% of the Main Street overlooking the park and the lake is currently for sale and available for development as are a number of other Winnipeg Beach and lakefront properties. Considering that almost the entire west side of the south basin of Lake Winnipeg is already under private ownership, many are loathe to allow an encroachment onto the modest access left to the general public.

Roger Turenne of Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society's Manitoba Chapter has several concerns related to this proposal which contravenes the new Parks Act. Section 14 of the Act states clearly: "Crown lands in a provincial park shall not be sold or ... disposed of in any other way". Turenne notes that this is the first time a park boundary is being modified under the provisions of the new Parks Act requiring public consultation. He's alarmed that a precedent will be set that allows tinkering with park boundaries for trivial purposes. And at the whim of the government.

According to Turenne, "Park boundaries should mean something. They should delineate a protected area where the object of the protection is held to be of importance to society, whether that may be ecological integrity, a culturally significant artifact or, in this case, a recreational resource in a natural setting (Lake Winnipeg)".

Winnipeg Beach park is a popular summer destination for many of the majority of Manitobans who do not own summer property. A group organizing to oppose the sale states "the park is the birthright of all Manitobans. The Minister of Natural Resources should protect this resource for all of us, not sell it to a few".

Concerns may be expressed to the Hon. Glen Cummings (ph. 945-3730, fax: 945-3586). For further information, call Judy at 488-1086 or Lisa at 895-8932.

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Environmental Protection Undermined

From page 5

group associated with the breast cancer movement, is particularly concerned with prevention and exposing ways in which the vested interests of the "medical-industrial" complex inhibits prevention-oriented research.

The Ontario government plans to eliminate a requirement that pulp and paper mills eliminate the use of chlorine by 2002. Attempts to undermine environmental protection are cause for worry.

My life has been irrevocably altered by cancer. We cannot afford to turn our backs on the fact that we allow carcinogens into our environment, our bodies and our off-spring everyday. Ill health and death are ultimately unavoidable but poor health and early death caused needlessly by our own polluting habits is criminal.

Subscriptions to *Herizons* are available for \$23.95 (incl. tax) from P.O. Box 128, Winnipeg, MB. R3C 2G1.

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Value Added

From page 1

2) Organic producers selling within their own province -- should their produce be stamped by "Canada Organic" or not? Should they just be approved by provincial organizations such as OPAM (Organic Producers Association of Manitoba)? These points need to be clarified.

3) There will still be the freedom to produce and sell locally for long established farmers (with established clientele); as long as the products remain within the province -- no exporting.

Eco-Journal: What would organic product standardization mean to Canada in terms of the Free Trade Agreement, WTO? Would it be better or worse?

Alex Scott: Well, organic produce is just like anything else: as everything leaving Canada has to be inspected in some form or another, it is not affected very much by free trade. However, standardization would make it better in terms of government to government accountability, which is the easiest way, the preferred level of negotiation when it comes to trade. Furthermore, the checks are all in place this way. Proper certification also protects the producers, not just the consumers. Hence, it is good for them and for us -- a win-win situation.

Eco-Journal: In your opinion, would standardization and organic farming in general support the diversification of prairie farms?

Alex Scott: Very much so! Indeed, organic farming is in many ways ahead of other diversification projects, in which case less is done as preparation locally. Organic products must be cleaned and package sealed, which implies a value added product as well as the creation of extra local employment. A good example of this is Tall Grass Prairie Bakery in Winnipeg, which buys its organic unbleached white flour locally and requires it package sealed and conveniently ready to use for its business. So we see that diversification lends itself very well to what we do. (Note: Tall Grass mills its own whole wheat flour from locally-grown organic grain, on site at the Bakery).

Eco-Journal: Is there anything else you would like to share?

Alex Scott: COAB really hopes this standardization process to be a unifying thing. The question has always been who is running the show? Perhaps, this would make people realize that we're all together on this. There is always the fear: Am I losing money along the line because of someone else's actions? Therefore I think it will be very beneficial if we can get a national organization where everybody from the producer to the consumer and everybody in between can be involved together. It's even happening within OPAM. It will no doubt improve credibility at all levels.

Editor's Note: *Eco-Network* member group, OPAM (Organic Producers of Manitoba) is one of this province's two certifying bodies. OPAM is involved in training inspectors, supporting organic producers through networking and education, and a variety of other projects. OPAM's recent AGM was well attended by producers in all sectors as well as people hoping to begin organic farming. The mood of the organization is upbeat - this year, interest in organics has shown a definite upsurge, and shows no sign of waning.

ECJ

GOVERNMENT HEEDS SD CONCERNS

by Anne Lindsey

Premier Filmon and the Provincial Cabinet appear to have heeded the many criticisms voiced about the White Paper on the Sustainable Development Act, at least in part. During last month's Sustainable Development "Awards of Excellence" dinner, Mr. Filmon announced that a Sustainable Development (SD) Act will be introduced during this Spring's Legislative Session, however, it will not contain the highly controversial sections on Land Use and Environmental Licensing, nor will it create a new Commission for Sustainable Development (so-called Parts 7 and 8).

According to Bryan Gray, Acting Executive Director of the SD Co-ordination Unit, the first priority for the immediate future will be to develop a statute of a fairly general nature, focussing on enshrining SD principles, placing an onus on government to incorporate SD at all levels, and creating the Round Table, roughly corresponding to Parts 1 to 6 of the White Paper. While these sections were generally more palatable than 7 and 8, they were not without controversy. For example, many have pointed out that the principles set out in the White Paper are greatly in need of updating, and that the Round Table process needs to incorporate some mechanism for accountability of its members.

Gray notes that the government is still very interested in making changes to the land use and permitting processes, and that a "consensus-building process" will be initiated as soon as possible to involve many stakeholders in deciding exactly what changes need to be made and how.

The earlier stakeholder consultations on the White Paper were difficult, and at times negative, Gray continues, but they at least

served the purpose of putting the subject on the public agenda, and opening up discussion. The government is seeking suggestions for how to set up and run this new process, and is eager to "get off on the right foot" according to Gray.

One thing is clear. We have not heard the end of the issue. Concerned Manitobans will need to ensure that their voices are heard if we are to retain and hopefully strengthen provisions for environmental protection in this province. This is especially true in light of plans to "harmonize" federal

and provincial environmental assessment regimes across the country. For many observers, "harmonization" is code for "offloading of federal responsibilities", allowing the provinces greater powers in the environmental area, particularly in the areas of land use and environmental licensing.



This recent Free Press cartoon exemplifies some of the concerns about the act.

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**The Manitoba Eco-Network, 2-70 Albert Street
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Group members are entitled to nominate representatives for a position on the Eco-Network Steering Committee. Group membership is open to any non-governmental, non-profit group which has as one of its objectives the enhancing or furthering of environmental quality, protecting the environment or environmental education.