



Can Winnipeg Get a Handle on Our Plastic Bag Problem?

The plastic bag is losing friends around the world

By Dennis Cunningham, Project Officer,
International Institute for Sustainable Development

THE CHANCE TO JOIN a growing number of cities, states, and countries leading the way in eliminating or restricting the use of plastic bags passed Winnipeg by in early March.

Members of the City of Winnipeg's Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works met to consider a report on a strategy for the elimination of plastic bag use in Winnipeg resulting from a motion introduced to council by St. Norbert Councillor Justin Swandel in December 2007.

The report offered some interesting Winnipeg-specific plastic bag facts: city residents use approximately 135 million plastic bags annually, 50 per cent of all bags are used more than once before heading to the landfill, and plastic bags make up less than 1 per cent of total landfill waste – equivalent to around 800 tonnes. The report also provided three options for consideration:

1. That the City increase promotion and education so citizens know they have options available for recycling bags. (Just try to find that information on the City of Winnipeg website right now.)
2. Hope the updated provincial Waste Reduction and Prevention Act has enough teeth in it to encourage Extended Producer Responsibility that includes plastic bags.
3. That plastic bags be banned from use in retail outlets.

However, the report only recommended that council pursue the first and second options. Since we don't seem to be going anywhere fast on this



This re-usable shopping bag, made from woven plastic bags, is one way to reduce waste and litter.

issue - with the exception of some interesting individual efforts - I thought it might be useful to provide a brief scan of actions by other jurisdictions.

The first community in North America to ban single-use plastic bags was the Town of Leaf Rapids, right here in Manitoba. By-law 462 was passed on March 22, 2007 and is a complete success. Five thousand reusable shopping bags were distributed to residents, single-use bags are no longer provided to residents by retailers, and the Town continues to field calls about the By-law regularly.

About a week later the San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted 10 to 1 to ban petroleum-based plastic bags in large markets and pharmacies. The

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legislation mandates the use of biodegradable plastic bags and recyclable paper bags and will divert about 10 million bags from residents annually. Critics of the ban felt it did not go far enough as city residents typically use 180 million bags every year.

African nations like Rwanda, Uganda, and Eritrea have banned plastic bags completely. South Africa (which at one time was producing 7 billion bags annually) and Kenya have introduced minimum thickness rules in order to make them more durable and expensive. The plastic bags that litter the countryside have been found to block drains and sewage systems, kill livestock that snack on the bags, and aid in the spread of malaria by creating ideal mosquito breeding areas in the water that collects in the waste bags.

Rather than ban bags outright, Ireland instituted a tax of 15 euro cents per bag in March 2002, raising an estimated 10 million euros in revenue annually for environmental projects. Almost immediately the levy resulted in per capita bag use shifting from an estimated 328 bags to just 21! In July 2007 the levy was raised to 22 euro cents in order to address an increase in per capita bag usage that was noted in 2006.

2009 will be a tough year for plastic bags in Australia when the State of Victoria introduces a 10 cent

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Executive Director's Letter

THIS EDITION OF THE ECO-JOURNAL finds us on the other side of the 25th Anniversary Gala event. It was an outstanding evening, and definitely a success, even if we environmentalists found ourselves a bit out of our natural habitats! But we are an adaptable bunch, and as capable as the rest of the world at dressing up. (Probably better than average when it comes to finding clothing gems at the Thrift Store.) See coverage and pictures on pages 6 and 7. Will this be an annual event? I doubt it - but it did seem a fitting way to mark our milestone 25th birthday with friends and supporters both old and new.

One especially nice aspect was the opportunity to work with a hotel on putting together a "green event". Radisson Hotel staff were eager to learn our tips and requirements so that they can be prepared for such requests in the future. In fact, they are working with Lise Smith to handle The Green Communities Association National Conference in April. Some of the green elements at our Gala were: procurement of locally grown (to the extent possible) and organic ingredients for the meal, including organic wines; table decor using natural and non-wasteful products; and waste-free signage and sponsor acknowledgement. We are extremely grateful for the support of all our sponsors and raffle prize donors, all of whom are acknowledged in the Gala coverage.

We've had a busy couple of months at the Network. The Spence Neighbourhood Green Map was launched at the Magnus Eliason Recreation Centre in early February, with many community members in attendance. You can now see the online map at <http://greenmap.mbeconetwork.org>.

Work will continue in the next couple of months on the Winnipeg and Region Green Map, with consultations with environmental groups about their suggested points of interest. Sadly, though, we will be losing our dedicated GIS Manager, Anke Kirch, who has had to resign her position for personal reasons. Anke has been a wonderful addition to our team, and has led the GIS Centre in two very exciting projects. We wish her well.

In other project news, we welcome Sacha Kopelow to our office as the new Water Caucus coordinator. Sacha will be working alongside Glen Koroluk in the next several months, in preparation to take over this position full time. She is known to folks who were around the Eco-Network a decade ago, as co-coordinator of our Youth Caucus and instigator of the successful Ecotopia Youth Activist camps - which continue today in the form of the annual Youth Activist Retreat.

Climate Change Connection is getting ready for their own pilot version of "Boot Camp", which will bring together folks from different parts of the province for training in how to be a climate champion in their own communities. And as the Eco-Journal goes to press, we're getting ready to hire a young person for coordinating duties of our fledgling Youth Environmental Network.

So as usual, nothing is dull around our office and organization. All of our projects and our day-to-day connecting and outreach activities are centred around issues of concern in the community, and the real desire of citizens to achieve greater sustainability. We are humbled to have been a part of this social change hub for the past 25 years, and there has never been a better time than now to build that involvement.

Enjoy this edition of the Eco-Journal, and don't hesitate to contact us if there are topics you'd like to see addressed, or if you'd like to be a volunteer writer!

Anne Lindsey

Executive Director, Manitoba Eco-Network



eco-events in Manitoba

For more environmental event listings see our website calendar at www.mbeconetwork.org.

APR 7-MAY 30 Green Kids 17th Annual School Tour

- Palais Oops! A Green Pantomime: a vaudevillian comedy combining witty and simple descriptions and demonstrations of some of the major environmental issues facing us today. Focusing on the positive, the play will educate audiences about climate change and the steps that can be taken. *Palais Oops!* addresses and supports current issues in the school curriculum focusing on climate change. **Cost for a single performance: Winnipeg-\$400; elsewhere in Manitoba-\$425. Cost for two performances: Winnipeg-\$625; elsewhere in Manitoba-\$700.** www.greenkids.com.

APRIL

3 Forests of the Northern Lights A fundraising evening introducing *The Boreal Action Project*. Auction of artworks by local artists and performances by DJ Zahn, Michael Dudeck, and fire dance troupe Wild Fire, as well as children's activities. **6-7pm open house, 7-10pm main event. Pantages Playhouse lobby, 180 Market St.** Tickets \$20 at Mondragon, 91 Albert Street; and Osborne Village Ink, 188 Osborne St. Refreshments, cash bar. Contact Susanne McCrea, 297-0321.

9 Ecosystem Health: A New Concept for Health Care. *Healthy people need healthy environments!* Dr. John Howard, current chair of CAPE, will challenge some key beliefs of Canada's health care system, emphasize the need to broaden the definition of health care to include the health of the water, the air and the land, and present an alternate model that focuses on Ecosystem Health as the basis for making health care and environmental decisions. All welcome, free admission. **April 9 at 4 p.m.,** cocktails/reception to follow. **Radisson Hotel, 280 Portage Ave.** For more information: 925-3770, rcm@resourceconservation.mb.ca.

9-11 Green Communities Association National Conference - Beyond the Tipping Point: From Awareness to Action Participate in skill-building workshops, learn from regional and national leaders, explore topical issues and forward-thinking ideals, network, gather resources, and share successes and lessons learned for delivery of effective environmental programs. See www.gca.ca.

19 Going Green Fair 1pm - 4pm, **Crestview United Church, 316 Hamilton Ave.** Organic Lawn Care Workshop at 1:15pm by Manitoba Eco-Network. Composting Workshop at 2:30pm by *Resource Conservation Manitoba*. Free admission. Proceeds to Neighbours Helping Neighbours.

20 Spring Volunteer Opportunity at FortWhyte Alive Feel the thrill of the EcoAdventure Race, sponsored by FortWhyte Alive, without a single day of training! Join in as a volunteer and cheer over 300 participants who are racing using bodies, boats, bikes, and blades over a 42km course through Winnipeg. Volunteers are positioned along the race route, at ex-

change zones, and at FortWhyte Alive on Sunday morning, April 20. Volunteer application forms at www.fortwhyte.org.

20 Project Peacemakers' Eco-Friendly Dinner Enjoy delicious vegetarian dishes, friendly peacemaker friends, and Mary Melnychuk, an inspiring and practical environmental speaker. Topic - Eco-Footprint: Walking Gently on the Earth. **6pm, Westworth United Church, 1750 Grosvenor Ave.** at Lanark. Tickets \$10, children 12 and under \$5. Contact 775-8178, info@projectpeacemakers.org. Tickets will not be sold at the door due to food planning requirements. *This is a fundraiser for Project Peacemakers.*

26 Gardening Saturday Keynote speaker Marjorie Harris, editor-at-large of Gardening Life magazine. The day-long conference includes displays, demonstrations, and gardening workshops. Marjorie Harris presentation is \$40 for members, \$50 for non-members. Workshops are \$8 each for members, \$10 for non-members, pre-registration required. Trade show only is \$4 members, \$5 non-members. **Canadian Mennonite University, 500 Shaftesbury Blvd.** Presented by *The Friends of the Assiniboine Park Conservatory*.

26 The Organic Food Council of Manitoba - COG AGM 1-4pm, **St. Norbert Arts Centre (SNAC).** Updates on our projects and activities including Farm Mentorship and the Growing Up Organic project. Manitoba Organic Milk Co-op (MOM) President Conrad Zacharias will offer the most current details about organic milk production in Manitoba. Come and enjoy local organic refreshments.

27 Manitoba Earth Day 2008: Stuffed? Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without. Explore how using less can give you more from life. Come see what a year's worth of plastic bags looks like, take a guided stroll through the prairie, give a gift of time, and enjoy live music and photo displays. Free admission. **10am-4pm, Living Prairie Museum, 2795 Ness Ave.** Contact mbeearthday@gmail.com.

MAY

The Manitoba Eco-Network Water Caucus will be organizing a multi-stakeholder meeting focusing on water conservation in May 2008. Contact Sacha Kopelow, Water Caucus Coordinator, sacha@mbeconetwork.org, 943-0318.

JUNE

1-7 Commuter Challenge! Challenge yourself, and those around you, to use environmentally friendly forms of transportation. It's a great opportunity to "go green" and you will be entered to win some fantastic prizes! Contact Sara, 925-3772, challenge@resourceconservation.mb.ca.

Eco-Wednesday Film Series

Our 2008 series of monthly film and discussion events highlights the issues of food and water. Each evening we will show a feature film and a short film, followed by a moderated discussion on the issues.

April 30: Crapshoot looks at the failure of our current sewage disposal system and alternatives

May 28: Slow Food Revolution shows regional, Slow Food movements around the world

ADMISSION:

\$5 for members, students, seniors, low-income
\$8 regular admission, or a 3-film pass is \$20
Tickets at the door

7pm at the Park Theatre
698 Osborne St. South

The last Wednesday of each month.
Ph: 947-6511 for more information,
or visit www.mbeconetwork.org.

Please join us!

Logging Licenses and the Peace of Primeval Nature

"...parks exist in order that every citizen...may satisfy a craving for Nature and Nature's beauty: that we may absorb the poise and restfulness of the forests; that we may steep our souls in the brilliance of the wild..."

—James B. Harkin

By Eric Reder, Manitoba Campaign Director, Western Canada Wilderness Committee

JAMES HARKIN IS A CANADIAN who left a hopefully indelible mark on this country. He was the first Commissioner of Dominion (National) Parks and accomplished a first throughout the world - he created a countrywide National Parks system. Starting in 1911 when a distinct Parks branch was created to manage a handful of natural areas designated as parks, Harkin built a representative park system, with criteria for establishing and protecting parks throughout Canada. During his tenure, he presided over the establishment of 13 new parks. He took early retirement, but not before accomplishing, in 1930, what he felt were two of the most important tasks of his career. One of these marquee events was the passing of the National Parks Act, which has provided Canadians with a living natural legacy.

In Manitoba, our Provincial Park Act is a relic of a bygone era, based on an economic model that allows commercial logging in parks with the assumption that this industrial activity is more important than any other benefit derived from parks. Today, we know with certainty that ecological benefits of natural areas left untouched are critical for a healthy existence, and the value of a park is far beyond what can be calculated

by the resources it contains. Manitobans along with people the world over don't need scientific evidence to know that parks provide us with peace of mind, a respite from the 'civilized world'. A century ago John Muir, accomplished American conservationist and direct influence of Harkin, eloquently reasoned upon our need for protected natural parks:

"Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in where nature may heal and cheer and give strength to the body and soul."

Our path forward in Manitoba, towards real protection for natural areas that nourish our lives, must include removing industrial logging from our provincial parks. The government reasons that there are legal obligations requiring us to let corporations log our parks. The legal requirement is contracts that assign three forest management license areas (FMLAs) to three massive logging corporations (Louisiana-Pacific, Tembec, and Tolko). These three corporations operate wood processing factories, and to guarantee wood for the factories, governments awarded long-term leases

of our provincial forested land to these corporations. A similar system of corporate tenure over provincially owned forests is used throughout Canada, but a special made-in-Manitoba addition is that every forest license happens to include a park that is being logged. The bare fact is that past governments in Manitoba have signed away control of our provincial park forests to logging corporations. Now, as the impact of commercial forestry on our parks is better known, we are left with the task of wresting control of our parks from logging corporations.

The good news is that all of the logging licenses are expiring in the next two years. On December 31, 2008, the FMLAs controlled by Tembec and Louisiana-Pacific will expire, with Tolko's license expiring the following year. Duck Mountain Provincial Park is part of Louisiana-Pacific's contract, Tembec's covers Nopiming Park, and Tolko's includes Grass River Park. The Manitoba government is expected to renew the licenses for another 20 years, but at this time they have an opportunity to remove provincial parks from the FMLAs.

Unfortunately there is a bump along this path to the protection of parks - something referred to as an

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Aboriginal Wilderness Conservation Project Launched

Role models inspire protection of boreal forest

Contributed by CPAWS Manitoba

TO ADVANCE THE GROWING TREND of Aboriginal-based initiatives to protect nature, culture, and emerging community economic opportunities, Indigenous leaders and environmentalists have launched a unique project to boost Aboriginal involvement in Manitoba boreal wilderness conservation efforts.

The **Aboriginal Boreal Conservation Leaders Project** consists of two partnering components: Stories of Aboriginal Boreal Conservation Leaders and the Volunteer/Employment program. Through sharing inspirational stories of Aboriginal wilderness protection advocates, the venture aims to encourage individuals, and provide the tools, to become engaged in conservation related pursuits.

"We believe this project does a great job of motivating individuals to become active in safeguarding our great wilderness," said Ron Thiessen, Executive Director of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society - Manitoba chapter. "As the majority of residents in Manitoba's boreal region are Aboriginal, it only makes sense that they drive the land use planning in their traditional territories."

A sterling example is Fisher River Cree Nation's efforts to establish a provincial park four times the size of Winnipeg on the southwest basin of Lake Winnipeg. Fisher River's Chief David Crate believes a healthy environment is essential to a prosperous future for his people.

"Keeping the natural landscape healthy ensures that traditional activities such as fishing and hunting can continue," said Chief Crate. "It also provides the grounds for diversifying local economies with lucrative eco and cultural tourism ventures."

The Aboriginal Boreal Conservation Leaders Project's approach supports advancing education through oral history and storytelling, a traditional way of teach-

ing in Aboriginal cultures.

"Learning through the voices of Aboriginal role models is a tremendous way to educate Indigenous people about our history of environmental stewardship and why it's important this practice continues," said Helen Robinson-Settee, Director of Aboriginal Education Directorate - Manitoba.

A Boreal Focus

The Aboriginal Boreal Conservation Leaders project focuses primarily on leaders from Manitoba's vast boreal forest region, as it is our province's greatest opportunity for wilderness conservation.

Over half of Manitoba's land base is carpeted with boreal forest wilderness. Canada's boreal is a mosaic of interconnected wildlands encompassing tree species such as birch, poplar, spruce, and pine. It's also home to many wildlife species such as bears, moose, wolves, foxes, owls, and a variety of wetland and songbirds. Over 600 First Nation communities are nested within Canada's great boreal region.

The boreal is the world's largest source of fresh water and it has been deemed the northern lungs of the planet. As the Earth's largest land-based storehouse of carbon, the boreal also plays a huge role in slowing the acceleration of climate change. Manitoba has a global responsibility to protect the ecological services its boreal forests provide. Yet less than 8% of Manitoba's boreal region is protected from industrial developments.



Chief David Crate speaks about his community's quest to create the Ochiwasahow (Fisher Bay) provin. park.

As Manitoba's boreal forests consist of a primarily Aboriginal population, conservation efforts would benefit greatly from the knowledge and experience of individuals who have lived and breathed community life in Manitoba's northern boreal. Incorporating this first hand connection with the landscape and its culture is a fundamental component to ensuring that developing goals and strategies of boreal conservation efforts are respect-

ful, appropriate, and effective.

CPAWS believes the Aboriginal Leaders in Boreal Forest Conservation Project will help increase Aboriginal involvement in Manitoba boreal forest conservation efforts. We have faith this initiative will lead to increased bodies and capacity in existing boreal focused organizations and will be followed by the birth of new and much needed boreal protection groups.

The Aboriginal Boreal Conservation Leaders project is supported by a grant from the Winnipeg Foundation. "The Winnipeg Foundation is pleased to support this project, which celebrates Aboriginal conservation leaders, and inspires others to become involved in boreal forest conservation," said Megan Tate, Community Grants Coordinator at The Winnipeg Foundation.

The Aboriginal Boreal Conservation Leaders website can be found at www.abcleaders.org. The Stories are also being printed in The Drum, Manitoba's largest Aboriginal newspaper.

Manitoba's Lands & Waters

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David Neufeld, Maggie Andres, Kholi, Ezra, Teyana, Jonah



Photos by: Steve Rauh and Liz Dykman



150 members, friends, and supporters

of the Manitoba Eco-Network gathered at the Radisson Hotel on March 8th to say Happy Birthday. Guests enjoyed a really great evening, with an atmosphere of good cheer and fun! Many folks commented on how nice it was to rekindle old friendships and catch up on happenings in different parts of the environmental community.

We worked hard to make this an eco-friendly event, and with lots of help, we succeeded. Our earthy table decorations were created out of river pebbles and sprigs of dogwood and red willow: contributions from Liz Dykman and the country abodes of David Neufeld and Maggie Andres, and Lorna Kopelow. The wine was a tasty organic offering. The food was organic and largely locally produced. We are grateful for the existence of Fresh Option Organic Delivery, and their local-food sourcing expertise. We also must acknowledge the efforts of the Radisson staff and chef, for whom a "green" event was a new experience.

Everyone enjoyed listening and dancing to the laid back music of the local three-piece band, Karma, and the crowd responded well to Zev Rumstein's energetic raffle ticket-selling efforts. The raffle succeeded in raising about \$1000. The excellent prizes were also a big draw, of course, and we thank all the prize donors.

Former chair of the Manitoba Eco-Network (and the longest sitting chairperson) Jack Dubois led off the speakers with reminiscences of both the local network and the national organization, of which we are a part. Conservation Minister Stan Struthers reminded the crowd of the youthful generation following us, who won't be content with the status quo, but pushing for real changes in the way we do things, and he thanked the environmental community for the advice that he receives from us.

Janine Gibson from the Organic Food Council of Manitoba used her time at the podium for music. In honour of International Women's Day, she sang a powerful tribute to longtime Executive Director of the Eco-Network, Anne Lindsey.

Anne concluded the speaking part of the evening by thanking everyone for joining in our celebrations. Then Anne asked all the staff members of the Eco-Network to stand up from their tables. Then, one by one, she asked different groups to also stand: anyone who has volunteered for the Eco-Network; anyone who has volunteered for any environmental organization; anyone who has written a letter to a government official demanding environmental

action; anyone who chooses to walk, bike, carpool, or take public transit to work each day; anyone who has initiated an environmental program at their workplace; anyone who recycles at home; anyone who supports a partner who takes environmental action... Soon, the entire room was on its feet. It was the most compelling reminder of the evening that we all have a role to play in creating the sustainable future of which we dream.

Our first ever gala was a terrific success, and we thank the hard working organizing committee: Lise Smith, Kristina Hunter, Julie Fine, Liz Dykman, and Anne Lindsey; all of our sponsors; and all of the fine people who showed up!



Manitoba Eco-Network
*sincerely thanks all of the
sponsors of this event:*

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-  **Beyond the Perimeter**
donated by *Northern Sun Farm* and *Northern Soul Wilderness Adventures*: A J Hunter
-  **Dream Day Massage and Dinner**
donated by *Dragonfly Scent-Free Massage and Bodywork* and *Bistro 7 1/4*: Ruth Marr
-  **Door prize**
donated by the *Manitoba Liquor Control Commission* and *Luxsolé Restaurant and Tapas Bar*: Ian Greaves

Gaps in Government Policies Allow Exposure to Toxins

By Sandra Madray, Children's Environmental Health Project

WE ARE BOMBARDED DAILY with exposure to toxic substances in consumer products. But we do not always give thought to how pervasive some of these toxic substances have become. These substances include lead, phthalates, Bisphenol A (BPA), brominated fire retardants, perfluorinated compounds (PFCs), pesticides, and solvents. We do not have to travel far for our exposure; it can be right at home.

There is mounting scientific evidence to indicate that the toxic substances found in many everyday consumer products have adverse effects on our health. Laboratory tests have indicated that toxins are being detected in children at a very early age, in the umbilical cords of babies, and in human breast milk. This is unconscionable.

Gaps in our current government policies result in exposure without consent. Industry must be forced to eliminate the toxins in consumer products. We should not have to wait for any more scientific evidence to prove that these toxic substances do harm to human health and the environment.

Listed below are some common toxins that can be found in consumer products.

Lead

Lead has been found in some children's toys, costume jewelry, and even in some imported kitchenware. It is a powerful neurotoxin for children. There is no acceptable level of exposure.

Phthalates

Phthalates are often found in cosmetics, perfumes, personal care products, cleaning products, toys, margarine containers, medical equipment, and kitchenware. Recent scientific studies indicate that

phthalates affect human male reproductive health. Animal studies have linked phthalates with having the potential to be endocrine disruptors and developmental toxins. Recently, a private members' bill to ban phthalates was passed in the Canadian House of Commons, but for it to be law it has to be passed by the Senate.

“Gaps in our current government policies result in exposure without consent. Industry must be forced to eliminate the toxins in consumer products.”

Bisphenol A

Bisphenol A (BPA) is present in many hard plastics such as baby, beverage, and water bottles, and is also used in dental sealants and in the lining of some food cans. BPA can change the expression of genes therefore making it capable of affecting different organs. Scientific literature has indicated that children are at great risk to BPA exposure since their immune systems are still developing, and thus they are not fully capable of protecting themselves against exposure to toxins. There is also evidence indicating adverse effects to low-level BPA exposure - lower than the acceptable exposure limit in the U.S. It is troubling that humans are showing levels of BPA higher than those reported for adverse health effects in laboratory studies.

BPA is currently under review by the Canadian Government and a risk assessment on BPA is expected in May 2008.

Brominated flame retardants

Polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs) are found in electrical and electronic goods. PBDEs are persistent and bioaccumulative and have been detected in humans, human breast milk, animals, and in the environment. Some tested children have had

concentration levels of PBDEs that are associated with thyroid dysfunction. PBDEs can cause reproductive and developmental disorders and are suspected hormone disruptors.

Some PBDEs have been phased out; others have been slated for virtual elimination or will be prohibited for manufacture by the federal government. However, PBDEs are still present in some consumer products.

Perfluorinated compounds

Perfluorinated compounds (PFCs) fall into another category of wonder chemicals because of their heat resistance and water and stain repellency. Their “slippery” nature makes them ideal for non-stick cookware. PFCs are toxic, bioaccumulative, and extremely persistent and can be found in humans, human breast milk, wildlife, and in the environment, including the far north.



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Regulations will prohibit some PFCs except in cases of "critical use". However, there is still a loophole; some consumer products containing certain PFCs will not be restricted.

Solvents

Solvents are present in many consumer products, including cosmetics. Apart from being neurotoxins, some are suspected carcinogens. At present, there are federal government initiatives to reduce solvents in some consumer products but not without resistance from industry since industry claims that the low solvent levels are safe. Ignored is the cumulative effect from all the other toxins in our daily exposure.

Pesticides

The Ontario College of Family Physicians recommends that people, and particularly children, who are especially vulnerable, should reduce their exposure to pesticides. Their pesticide review showed consistent links to certain types of cancer, neurological problems, and reproductive disorders, among other health disorders.

"We lag behind other jurisdictions that have chosen to reduce or eliminate pesticides for lawn care and mosquito control."

Some lawn care companies are now offering pesticide-free lawn programs and there has been a growth in organic farming.

In Winnipeg, buffer zones and signage for the non-cosmetic use of pesticides are supposedly a step in the right direction for the elimination of the non-cosmetic use of pesticides. Environmental groups think otherwise. Unfortunately, we lag behind other jurisdictions that have chosen to reduce or eliminate pesticides for lawn care and mosquito control.

Phase out toxic chemicals

With several medical reports citing environmental links to increased asthma, cancer, and developmental and birth defects in children, it is long overdue for the government to better protect the health of babies, children, and the general public. Toxic substances found in consumer products must be phased out and there must be better disclosure for consumer labeling. These proactive measures would not only improve public health but would also help to reduce our soaring medical health care costs. And, at the same time, be a positive step in maintaining a healthy ecosystem.

References used for this article are available. Please contact the editor at editor@mbeconetwork.org.

Groundwater Management Planning for Southeast Manitoba

The Manitoba Eco-Network was present at the second of many meetings to come of the SRGMP (Southeast Regional Groundwater Management Plan) planning group organized by Manitoba Water Stewardship in late February. The objective of this group is to develop, over two years, a management plan for the groundwater resources of Southeastern Manitoba, which include the Sandilands Aquifer complex and associated portions of the Carbonate and Winnipeg Aquifers.

This planning process has precipitated from recommendations stemming from the Manitoba Clean Environment Commission Report two years ago in which the Pembina Valley Water Cooperative proposed to withdraw water from the Sandilands region. The Plan "will include definition of the groundwater resources in this area, identify locations of groundwater recharge and discharge, document existing groundwater use and agree on regional sustainable yield/use estimates, identify necessary protection measures, and identify additional information that may need to be collected." (MWS Outline of Proposed Planning Process, p. 2)

The group consists of local stakeholders including representatives of rural municipalities, conservation districts, the livestock production industry, and a sprinkling of ENGO and First Nations, as well as provincial and federal science members.

Public workshops will be held in which citizens may identify issues of concern. Please contact the Eco-Network if you wish to be notified of these events.

2008

Environmental Awards

It's Awards time again!

That is: it's time to think about nominating your favourite environmentalist(s) for the

**Manitoba Eco-Network
Annual Environmental Award.**

The award, started in 1990, is given "in recognition of significant contributions to the protection and awareness of Manitoba's environment". It is a great way for us to recognize the hard work of our peers in the environmental community.

You can see a list of all the past winners on our website at www.mbeconetwork.org/projects_awards.php.

All nominations should be made using the form that may be found at the web address given above. If you do not have access to the internet, call us at 204-947-6511 for a copy of the form.

The deadline for nominations this year is May 3.

Three categories are available:
Individual, group, and "special".



2008 Manitoba Climate Change Conference & Earth Forum

April 22 & April 23, 2008
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Two days of concurrent workshops, an evening public forum on Earth Day, an environmental sector trade show and poster design competition.

Who should attend:

Policy makers, business owners, academics, public, government leaders, consultants, anyone affected by, or interested in, the emerging climate change paradigm.

Reserve a trade show exhibit, become a sponsor, or register as a delegate today at www.climateforum.ca



Plastic Bag Problem

<< continued from page 1

levy. New South Wales and South Australia are banning free single-use bags outright. Additionally, Australia's federal government recently announced it is looking at either imposing a nationwide ban or a levy at the end of this year. South Australia expects the ban to mean 400 million fewer plastic bags will enter their waste stream.

On June 1 this year all shops in China will ban the production of ultra-thin plastic bags and prohibit shops from offering free plastic bags to consumers. Remarkably, China is taking just six months to implement this nationwide ban. Companies that sell, make, or distribute ultra-thin bags will be fined or have assets or goods seized. Three billion plastic bags per day are used in China and 37 million barrels of crude oil are required to manufacture the annual demand for bags in the country.

Here in Winnipeg there are many things we can do to reduce our use of plastic bags, including using reusable cloth bags when shopping, visiting retailers like Mountain Equipment Coop (MEC) or d.a. Niels Gourmet Kitchenware who make a donation to environmental causes when you don't take a shopping bag. (When you do take a shopping bag at MEC, the bag is starch-based and bio-degradable.) Consider replacing the plastic products you are using with compostable/biodegradable items from stores like the Waste Reduction Store or Eat It. Write your city councillor, MLA, and MP to implement a proper plastic bag ban or levy.

Logging

<< continued from page 4

evergreen clause that is the antithesis of its name. Before logging licenses expire, the government is legally obligated to renew them. The only party that can cancel a license with an evergreen clause is the holder of the license - the corporation. In effect, licenses with evergreen clauses are awarded in perpetuity.

Does this mean that for the rest of time, logging corporations will continue to destroy our provincial parks, turning wild forests into nothing more than tree plantations? Not necessarily. There is a solution that has been used in other parts of Canada - buy out the licenses. It seems audacious to pay a corporation from outside Manitoba to stop destroying our provincial parks - and it is. But, if it is the only way to stop clearcut logging in our cherished parks, it is a step the Manitoba government must take. There is no question of renewing the licenses as they are - that is not an option. The government must act for the betterment of our future, follow the wishes of the majority of Manitobans, and remove parks from logging licenses.

Returning to our history lesson, James Harkin's second great accomplishment of 1930, which happened in a time of economic uncertainty just as the logging corporations are experiencing today, was to permanently remove all industrial activity from national parks.

"...the National Parks ensure that every Canadian, by right of citizenship, will still have free access to vast areas possessing some of the finest scenery in Canada, in which the beauty of the landscape is protected from profanation, the natural wild animals, plants and forests preserved, and the peace and solitude of primeval nature retained."

--James Harkin

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APRIL

4&9 Become a Green Commuter! Learn the tools of green commuting, including how to navigate your way around the city using transit, walking, cycling, and carpooling. Plus get tips on how to buy and maintain a fuel-efficient vehicle. Improve your health, save money and the environment!

West End Library - Friday, April 4, 12pm-1:00pm. Ph: 986-4677.

Millennium Library - Wednesday, April 9, 12pm-1:00pm. Ph: 986-6462.

5 Organic Gardening Workshops: Creating an Edible Landscape and Growing an Abundance of Food in Small Spaces Featuring Ron Berezan, the "Urban Farmer" from Edmonton, Alberta. 10am, St. Mary's Road United Church. \$30 including lunch, \$20 workshops only. To register contact: Jackie, 284-9113, jgkt@shaw.ca. www.theurbanfarmer.ca.

19 Wilderness First Aid If you go out in the woods, you just might get hurt. How do you set that sprained ankle or treat a campfire burn? Paddle Manitoba doctors and paramedics will share the best options for medical treatment when you're far from the nearest hospital. 7-9pm, Fort Whyte Alive Interpretive Centre. Free to all Paddle Manitoba and Fort Whyte Alive members. \$4 donation from non-members is gratefully accepted. Coffee and soft drinks will be served. Beer is for sale.

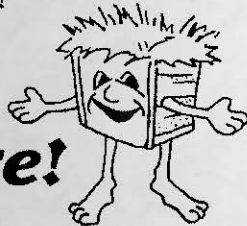
MAY

9 Woodlot Management Seminar Learn how to manage your woodlot! Indoor and outdoor session covers recreational benefits, wildlife benefits, seedling sources, poplar harvesting, hybrid poplar, Christmas trees, and non-timber forest products. 11am-2pm, Winnipeg River Learning Centre, Powerview-Pine Falls. \$20/person, lunch and refreshments included. Please pre-register, contact: Winnipeg River Learning Centre, 367-2761.



is offering free composting workshops
in May and June!

Turn Waste into Treasure!



Free Basic Backyard Composting Workshops at a Winnipeg Public Library near you!

To pre-register or for more information, visit
www.resourceconservation.mb.ca or call 925-3778.

Learn all you need to know to start backyard composting, including: the five key factors to successful composting, choosing a bin and how to use finished compost.

Make your Own Vermi-Composter Workshop

on Thursday, May 29th from 7 - 8:30
at the Eco-Centre (303 Portage Ave, 3rd floor).
Fee for materials. Pre-registration required:
visit www.resourceconservation.mb.ca or call 925-3778.

For the indoor composter, come and learn the basics
of vermi-composting while constructing your own bin.

New In the Library

The Alice Chambers Memorial Library has the following new titles. Check them out!

New Books:

Biomimicry: Innovation Inspired by Nature

By Janine Benyus

Published by Harper Perennial, New York, 2002

This profound and accessible book details how science is studying nature's best ideas to solve our toughest 21st-century problems. Biomimicry is transforming our life on Earth. Biomimics study nature's best ideas: photosynthesis, brain power, and shells – and adapt them for human use. They are revolutionizing how we invent, compute, heal ourselves, harness energy, repair the environment, and feed the world.

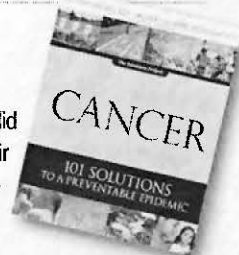


Cancer: 101 Solutions to a Preventable Epidemic

By Liz Armstrong, Guy Dauncey, & Anne Wordsworth

Published by New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, 2007

Cancer: 101 Solutions to a Preventable Epidemic offers solid evidence that many cancers are preventable, since their causes lie with the contamination of our bodies by pollution in the air we breathe, the products we use, the water we drink, and the food we eat. Cancer: 101 Solutions to a Preventable Epidemic takes a positive, solutions-based approach to this unwanted disease.



Caves & Karst in Manitoba's Interlake Region: from surveys conducted by the Speleological Society of Manitoba

Edited by W.D. McRitchie and K.M. Monson

Published by the Speleological Society of Manitoba, 2000

A comprehensive review and exploration history of caves in the interlake region of Manitoba.

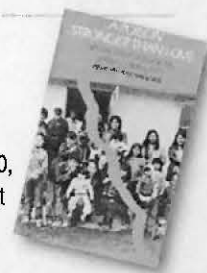


A Poison Stronger than Love: The Destruction of an Ojibwa Community

By Anastasia M. Shkilnyk

Published by Yale University Press, 1985

Grassy Narrows first captured national attention in 1970, when mercury pollution was discovered in the adjacent English-Wabigoon River. In the course of the assessment of environmental damage, an even more compelling tragedy came to light. When well-intentioned bureaucrats relocated the Grassy Narrows band to a new reserve in 1963, the results were the unraveling of the tribe's social fabric and a sharp deterioration in their personal morale. The book explores the origins and causes of the suffering in the community life and describes the devastating impacts of mercury contamination on the health and livelihood of the Indian people.



New Videos:

Dig It! Biointensive Sustainable Mini-Farming

Starring John Jeavons (VHS; 1997)

The video is by John Jeavons, master gardener and author of *How to Grow More Vegetables. Dig it!* teaches the biointensive agriculture technique of double-digging which allows for easier soil preparation, and larger yields from less land.

Watershed Planning and Participation Processes

The opposite of stated government goals for public participation

By Lindy Clubb

WHAT IS A WATERSHED? It's an area of land that captures water and funnels it into surface lakes, rivers and streams, and underground aquifers. Currently, the province is funneling information into plans to protect watersheds in various areas of Manitoba. I spent months attending workshops in southwestern Manitoba, sponsored by Conservation Districts (CDs) within the upper Assiniboine River basin. Their website says, "the watershed plan will be prepared based on local opinions, community needs, and up to date scientific information". Sounds good, but how is the process working for people who want to prevent pollution? There are resource constraints and a slim amount of information to draw on for scientific data in the regions.

I particularly liked the entreaty to "get to know your watershed!" I thought that meant to canvass the familiar and unfamiliar reaches of the local Little Saskatchewan or Rolling Rivers, dip netting for aquatic life, or finding pungent stalks of wild mint on the slopes beneath the trestles of small bridges. Instead, it meant driving for hours to meetings in various locations, listening to primarily industry and government presentations, speaking up for seconds during side gatherings with twenty people, and bowing out of the final agenda. I was the representative for MFS (Mixedwood Forest Society), the alternate for the Manitoba Woodlot Association and Wolfe Creek Conservation, and one of only a small handful of environmental "stakeholders" in the room. We advocated for erosion and stormwater controls, Aboriginal participation, volunteer monitoring, equal weight for ecological concerns in competing water rights and developments, and cataloguing point and non-point source pollution (such as run-off from spread fields and feedlots saturated with manure nutrients).

Although early announcements included a promise for openly discussing concerns, working together for solutions, and arriving at decisions by consensus, a

different process was imposed. When we asked for environmental concerns to come ahead of economic concerns in the mission statement, municipal leaders loudly objected. These issues were taken over by the planning leadership, effectively silencing us. When MFS sent in recommendations to improve the process and presentations, they were ignored - the agendas had already been set. Ironically, four harmful developments were licensed by municipalities while we talked about planning for watershed protection. Any questions we had were put on hold, verbal responses went unrecorded in the minutes, and a six-month attempt to engage both youth and the aboriginal communities failed.

Our experience was more or less the opposite of stated government goals for public participation, a crucial component for plan success:

- Watershed management and planning will provide forums that will encourage and provide opportunity for consultation and meaningful participation in decision-making processes by Manitobans.
- Transparent processes and opportunity for information sharing and open communication will be provided.
- The use of local knowledge and traditional ecological knowledge is a critical element in the understanding of water management and adaptations at a community level.

Public involvement is lacking right now. The Watershed Planning Advisory Team (WPAT) meetings were restricted to stakeholder representatives who have been assigned the task of selling the State of the Watershed Report to the public, then to claim the public has been consulted and participated.

The Little Saskatchewan River runs right through Keeseekoowenin reserve, yet the band office received the same last call for participation that we did. We suggested that meetings might be held on some of the five

local reserves, so that we travel to their territory for a change. Credit might be granted to biology students in local schools as incentives for them to attend the meetings. Outreach and invitations to the many rural associations for women might have produced a gender parity and balance that's lacking now. After all, each part of our society needs and uses water. Why not work on including them? And include at the beginning of the discussion.

The people who make up the watershed's population should be woven through the process to strengthen the results. Of course there will be conflicting ideas and a need for protocol, but we've overcome those obstacles in the past. After our faith in this WPAT process had been lost, I checked with two other public participants in a Groundwater Management Planning Group for southeast Manitoba. Their representatives were chosen on the basis of geography, not background or experience with ecological concerns and research. Old and limited data will be used to draw conclusions and the representatives were not provided with basic information on the local aquifer. Inaccurate maps came without explanations for boundaries. Major water users and polluters were not defined. There were no calculations of water use by current livestock operations. The representatives' agendas were preset, the province is again guiding the process, and some of the same people who supply water commercially to the region also have a strong voice on the committee. In the east, participants felt the process was compacted from a necessary ten years and jammed into two, without relevant scientific study. Like us, there were six men for every woman.

Ruth Pryzner, a sheep farmer and resident of Daly municipality, stood up at a meeting early in our process and pointed out that the same decision-makers who had accommodated polluting industries were also members of municipal councils, CD boards, and the watershed planning process, and asked, therefore, what would change? If the primary goal is to safeguard drinking water supplies and sources, then why are municipal councils and the province issuing permits for large-scale development on the edges of these supplies while the planning goes on?

Practices aren't following the principles of watershed planning, and we're an audience for that. ☹



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