

Ecology & Action

SUMMER 2020



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VOL. 38 NO. 1

PM 4005 0204 | ISSN 2369-5943

A publication of  Ecology Action Centre

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Ecology Action Centre

Ecology & Action is published three times a year by the Ecology Action Centre (the EAC), a charitable organization (PM Registration # 40050204).

The Ecology Action Centre is a member-based environmental charity in Nova Scotia. We take leadership on critical environmental issues from biodiversity protection to climate change to environmental justice. We are grounded in community, and a strong voice and watchdog for our environment. We work to catalyze change through policy advocacy, community development and building awareness. We take a holistic approach to the environment and our economy to create a just and sustainable society. Views expressed in *Ecology & Action* are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent the EAC or its supporters.

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Letter from the Centre

WE LOVE HEARING FROM YOU! EMAIL YOUR THOUGHTS TO MAGAZINE@ECOLOGYACTION.CA

History will recall early 2020 as a time when the world paused. Amidst those uncertain weeks and months of shutdown, as family and social lives, work and travel were curtailed, a new determination emerged.

Without the incessant pollution of traffic and industry, skies and waterways cleared, if only momentarily, in centres like Beijing, New Delhi and Venice. Wildlife reclaimed urban spaces from Los Angeles to Toronto. And yet, the pandemic's impacts placed further strain on communities everywhere grappling with pre-existing crises of rising inequities, worsening climate change and biodiversity collapse.

The movements for a Just and Green Recovery and Black Lives Matter are mounting a renewed, intensifying presence. They are the reckonings of long-standing, interconnected struggles. The social and economic systems which destabilize our climate and devastate ecosystems are the same ones dispossessing Indigenous peoples of their land, brutalizing Black bodies and fomenting intolerance. The root causes are connected: there will be no environmental justice without social justice.

Now, like in a childhood game of statues, Nova Scotia's pause is over for the time being and activity cautiously resumes. We re-enter a changed world where it is not business as usual – and where our connection with nature is more meaningful than ever.

“ Just and Green Recovery and Black Lives Matter are the reckonings of long-standing, interconnected struggles. ”

Working remotely still to ensure health and safety, EAC staff continue vital community building and advocacy work with renewed hope and urgency. In June, the unanimous approval by HRM Council of HalifACT 2050 was the culmination of years of our engagement and activism. It contains the most ambitious GHG reduction targets of any jurisdiction in Canada. In July, the release of the EAC's report on zero emission vehicles urged the provincial government to provide consumer incentives and supply-side mandates to increase electric vehicle uptake.

This issue of Ecology & Action highlights mid-COVID recovery efforts, including a story on sustainability and the rural economy, as well as perspectives on building back better through urban space design and food resiliency systems.



Time to Act for a Just and Green Recovery

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a societal disruption unlike anything we've seen for generations. Impacts of the crisis have placed further strain on communities already grappling with the pre-existing crises of rising inequity, worsening climate change, and biodiversity destruction.

Now more than ever, it is clear that business-as-usual isn't working. But together we can build a just, sustainable recovery for all. One that prioritizes collective well-being over the pursuit of profit for the few and recognizes that our own health relies on the health of the ecosystems that sustain us.

Inspired by those same ecosystems, the **Ecology Action Centre** has developed five guiding principles upon which we can build a collective vision of the future. These guiding principles can steer our decision-making to ensure that in all our recovery efforts, people and the planet come first:

- 1 **Prioritize well-being over GDP as a measure of economic success.**
- 2 **Centre the voices of Indigenous Peoples and other oppressed communities.**
- 3 **Embrace complexity to build resilience.**
- 4 **Empower communities and ensure space for shared decision making.**
- 5 **Sustain the ecosystems that sustain us.**

Choices made today will set a course for our society for years to come, and there will be powerful forces that seek to use this moment to reinforce unjust, exploitative systems for their own gain.

In this critical moment, your voice matters! Now is the time to let governments know there is wide-spread support for a Just and Green Recovery.

TAKE ACTION

Add your voice to the growing movement for a better future!

Visit ecologyaction.ca/just-green-recovery learn more about EAC's five principles, and to tell decision makers it is time to act for a Just and Green Recovery.



Artwork by Jan Berger of Paperhand Puppet Intervention

REMEMBERING Silver Donald Cameron

by **BRIAN GIFFORD** /// EAC Volunteer

You might have seen the photo on EAC's 25th anniversary edition of *Between the Issues* – three long-haired guys in Port Hawkesbury. Silver Donald Cameron, an ardent and personable environmentalist who died at the age of 82 on June 1st of this year, is ultimately responsible for that photo. His death is a great loss to the people of NS and the environmental movement.

In 1973 Silver Donald invited EAC staff to join him in Shad Bay to sail into Halifax on the *Hirondelle*, his newly rigged small schooner that he was sailing from Lunenburg to his Cape Breton home. He had a proposition for us: we should open an office in Port Hawkesbury and hire his then companion Margot Lamont. Kathleen Flanagan and I heard him out while gliding over the swells. We liked the idea, so our only office outside Halifax was born. The three staff in the photo were visiting the new office, as it was closing unfortunately, but the photo has become a touchstone of sorts since it was featured on the 25th anniversary publication.

Years later Silver Donald informed me that the 1973 trip was his first time ocean sailing, and he was still learning the ropes – and the boat sank just as it reached his home port, so we're lucky, and consequently EAC survived! He was a great storyteller and sailor. That was my first time seeing Nova Scotia from a small sea-going vessel, and it gave me a small glimpse of the province from a view that has been elemental in our history.

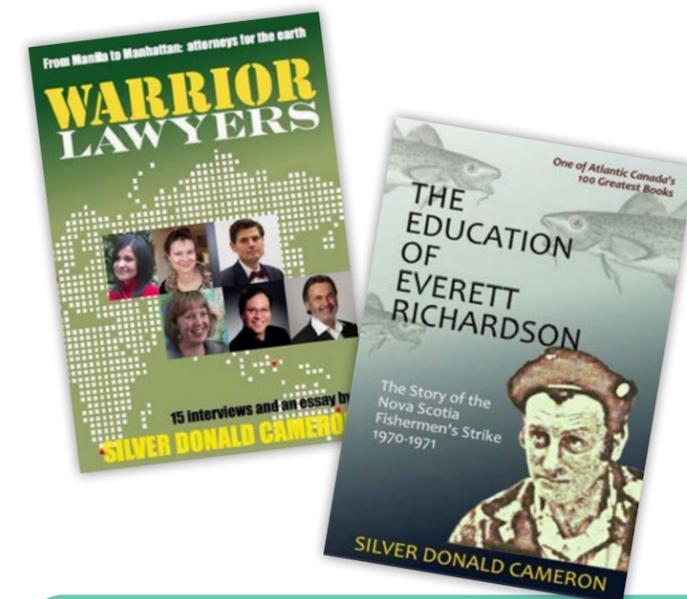
Silver Donald was a wonderfully curious, good-natured person who had a rare gift for telling the stories of ordinary people, often from a social justice perspective and always sympathetically. His book *The Education of Everett Richardson* was republished this year, the 50th anniversary of the fishermen's strike of 1970 that galvanized the province and pitted fishermen against the power of multi-national corporations and local elites. It is a remarkable story told with such empathy, humour, and vivid clarity that it is as compelling today as it was when first published. It is hard to believe the terrible work conditions and pay offshore trawlermen endured. The strike had a lasting impact and offered hope that ordinary people taking action can make real change.

In his new introduction to the book he compares the role of huge corporations and elites in exploiting the working people on whom they depend to the similar role that those same corporations and elites play in exploiting the natural resources on which they depend. We continue to work for an alternative kind of economy, and Silver Donald Cameron was an ally in both struggles for justice and a better world.



His 2016 book *Warrior Lawyers* recounts stories of lawyers around the world defending the natural world, achieving huge wins worth billions of dollars and forcing changed practices. His "Green Interviews" have featured videos with Canadian and international environmental leaders and visionaries. His films on Green Rights and Salmon Wars are compelling.

Silver Donald was still as warm, curious, and sharp as ever when I met him earlier this year in events related to the republishing of *The Education of Everett Richardson*. It was a sad shock to learn of his death due to a recent cancer diagnosis. EAC members can pay tribute to his memory by reading his books, listening to the Green Interviews and carrying on your own efforts to transform the world.



Brian Gifford is a founding member of the EAC and a long-standing volunteer. He is currently an active member of our Energy Action Team.

Building Back Better

HOW NOVA SCOTIA CAN LEARN FROM INCLUSIVE CLIMATE ACTION

by MEGHAN MCMORRIS /// EAC Volunteer

Picture this: six people sit around a circular table. Each person has a marble. On the count of three, each person launches their marble into the centre of the table. 3, 2, 1 — GO! The marbles hurtle toward one another, each with their own momentum, balance, and power.

Each marble represents a crisis that we currently face: environmental degradation, systemic racism, poverty, social injustice, colonialism, and consumerism. SMASH. The marbles collide. This collision represents climate change.

The challenge of addressing climate change is not simply an ecological one. It involves addressing inequality, inequity, and injustice. If we do not consider these complexities as we address the challenge of climate change, we run the risk of amplifying other existing crises or creating new ones.

Climate change does not impact people and communities equally. Those who face systemic discrimination and racism, who are underrepresented in governments and institutions, and who are living with low incomes are impacted by climate change first, and worst. Acknowledging this and integrating it into the way that urban areas act on climate change is critical in making sure that our

The Ripple Effect of Connecting Rural to Urban: Medellin, Colombia

Medellin is a city of history. Once controlled by the drug cartel of Pablo Escobar, the city is actively trying to ensure that positive changes are not just for the few. In 2004, the government made an active decision to try to address the fragmented social and physical nature of Medellin, and the inequality that existed within the city.

Not long before, the government had launched a green corridor initiative, which aimed to transform polluted areas of Medellin into safe and accessible green spaces. Sadly, the people who lived in the corridor area were people from low-income households who faced discrimination on many levels and were ultimately pushed out of their neighbourhood. It was an example of a project that aimed to address climate change and quality of life resulting instead in green gentrification, displacement, and ongoing oppression.

Having learned from this, the government approached the issue of physically connecting the communities of Medellin by looking at what was preventing people from coming into the urban core and identifying the circumstances that would actually enable people

climate solutions benefit those who are currently marginalized in our society, rather than reinforcing existing inequities. Addressing climate change is intimately connected to addressing systemic racism, colonialism, and injustice. In fact, it is the same work.

Urban areas around the world are engaging with inclusive climate action. This approach aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while addressing the unequal impacts of climate change on different communities and people as well as the impacts of historical and current injustices that they face.

Did you know that more than 50% of the global population lives in cities, and that cities account for over 70% of global greenhouse gas emissions? Cities also use more than 66% of the world's energy. Urban areas present an immense opportunity for this work to happen.

Of the many global examples of inclusive climate action, two stand out as helpful examples for urban areas in Nova Scotia to take inspiration from: Medellin, Colombia, and Barcelona, Spain. These cities offer different lessons for Nova Scotia, as we take on more climate action as a province.

to make the journey. Through this process, the Metrocable was developed. The Metrocable is a gondola system that travels at 16 kilometres per hour. It offers direct routes from rural communities into the urban core, reducing the commuting time from two hours to just 30 minutes. This direct route only requires riders to pay once. Previously, riders would have to pay multiple fares for multiple rides in a transfer system. In addition to improved access to the urban core, people were also able to get to the rural communities more easily. This meant that services, businesses, and investors began to establish themselves in rural communities, property value increased, and the number of jobs increased.

COVID-19 has taught us the value of resilient communities. There is strength in communities that are connected to one another, and in strong local economies where people have access to good jobs. As Nova Scotia rebuilds better, we should consider the lesson that Medellin offers in ensuring that everyone can access employment in their local communities, and that clean economic growth can happen when rural communities are connected.



Photo: Anthony Gonzalez Rodriguez

TAKE ACTION

Sign on to our #ClimateGoals campaign at ecologyaction.ca/climategoals, and stay tuned for upcoming provincial consultations where you can make your voice heard!

The Medellín Metrocable in action!

A People-First, Climate Economy Action Plan: Barcelona, Spain

In 2018, the city of Barcelona launched The Climate Plan 2018-2030. Similar to many other climate plans, it aimed to reduce Barcelona's emissions by 45% by 2030 and reach net-zero by 2050. What makes the plan unique, however, is its five main priority areas: people first, starting at home, transforming communal spaces, climate economy, and building together.

Typically, climate plans tend to focus on mitigation and adaptation first and then on justice and community participation once the actions for the plan are being developed. Barcelona's plan did the opposite. It built from the work of previous social justice working groups, such as the group that was developed for their Plan for Gender Justice. The plan put vulnerability and systemic injustice at the forefront of its climate solutions.

For example, through the Barcelona Climate Plan, the city is aiming for the entire population to be within a 10-minute walking distance from an emergency shelter by 2030. Imagine if everyone in urban Halifax was within a 10-minute walk from a shelter? What about a grocery store? During both COVID-19 and Hurricane Dorian, public transit service in Halifax was reduced. During the hurricane, people could not access emergency shelters. During COVID-19, people who rely on public transportation have become more food-insecure. How does this all change if decision-makers consider walkability to essential services as a part of a resilient recovery?

Medellin and Barcelona are timely examples for the province of Nova Scotia. Between now and December 31, 2020, the provincial government will be developing climate goals and a provincial clean growth plan as part of the Sustainable Development Goals Act. Through public engagement sessions, the government will be looking for insight from communities into which direction the province needs to go as it heads toward a carbon-neutral 2050. This will be an important opportunity for Nova Scotians to demand provincial goals that tackle climate change, sustainable economics, systemic injustice, equity, and inclusion. It is only by considering all these issues, for all people, that Nova Scotia can propel itself on a trajectory of resilience. COVID-19 continues to be a wake-up call that resilience is the only path forward.

As cities such as Medellin, Barcelona, Seattle, Paris, Sydney, Cape Town, New York City, Buenos Aires, and Los Angeles engage in inclusive climate action, we have an opportunity to learn from them and ensure that no person or community in Nova Scotia is left behind.

For more information on examples of inclusive climate action, visit C40 Cities at C40.org.

Meghan McMorris is the former Community Energy Coordinator at the Ecology Action Centre and is an advocate for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Environmental Sustainability and the Rural Economy

A CONVERSATION WITH GLYNN WILLIAMS OF AUTHENTIC SEACOAST COMPANY

by ROWAN SWAIN /// EAC Staff

With close to half of Nova Scotia's population living in rural areas, it's no surprise that developing the rural economy is a crucial issue for our province – especially as we plan for a post-COVID-19 world. But, as we've seen all too often, economic development done poorly can have lasting negative effects on our environment, our health, and our communities.

“Jobs are important to communities and their future, but how economic development occurs must take into account environmental and social justice issues to ensure sustainability and a bright future for Nova Scotia.”

What is the alternative? As we look to the road ahead and begin to re-open our economy, can businesses operating in rural Nova Scotia grow while environmental sustainability is ensured?

Glynn Williams, founder and owner of Authentic Seacoast, has some thoughts on that. Headquartered in Guysborough, Nova Scotia, Authentic Seacoast Ltd brings together a brewery, distillery, and other locally produced products such as maple syrup and fair-trade coffee. They also offer curated Nova Scotia experiences through their properties and tours. Glynn has invested tens of millions in Nova Scotia and continues to expand the company and create jobs. And, as the company has grown, Glynn has made specific efforts to minimize the environmental impact of his business.

“Since our founding, 15 years ago, we have strived to create an authentic, sustainable business that demonstrates leadership on environmental practices and economic development,” says

Glynn. “Jobs are important to communities and their future, but how economic development occurs must take into account environmental and social justice issues to ensure sustainability and a bright future for Nova Scotia.”

It's more than just talk. The efforts the company has undertaken to develop their business sustainably are impressive. In the last decade, Authentic Seacoast has dramatically reduced water consumption by improving processes at their distillery/brewery, installed a catalytic oxidizer in their coffee roasting process to improve air emissions, established a large apiary to restore local bee populations, developed relationships with local farmers to use their spent grains, purchased various properties to protect them from development, and renovated their buildings to reduce energy consumption. A preliminary greenhouse gas (GHG) assessment revealed that the forests they own and protect absorb over seven times the company's total GHG emissions.



Glynn Williams, Owner and Founder of Authentic Seacoast engaging with the Guysborough community.

Photo: Authentic Seacoast Company Ltd.

TAKE ACTION

Shop local! Spend your dollars with independent local businesses who follow good environmental practices.

With over a dozen brands under the company's umbrella (and more being added), clearly, something is working. In an area burdened by rough economic times, this kind of growth is stimulating the local economy and creating new jobs. And Authentic Seacoast's focus on sustainable practices hasn't hindered the company's success.

This year marks the 15th anniversary of the Authentic Seacoast Company.

“We were attracted to the natural beauty of Nova Scotia from the start. We have worked hard ever since to protect the environment,

raise awareness, and inspire others to do the same. Every one of us, either as citizens or businesses, needs to be aware of our impact on the environment, and to implement strategies to live in harmony with nature.”

We couldn't agree more. That's why the Ecology Action Centre is proud to have Authentic Seacoast as one of our Sustainability Allies. As we begin to imagine a better normal for our communities in a post COVID-19 world, we encourage more businesses to follow their lead by making environmental protection and sustainability a key part of developing rural Nova Scotia.

Rowan Swain is a Member Relations Officer at Ecology Action Centre, and has worked with the EAC for seven years. Outside of work he can generally be found playing music, organizing in his community, and escaping to the woods whenever possible.

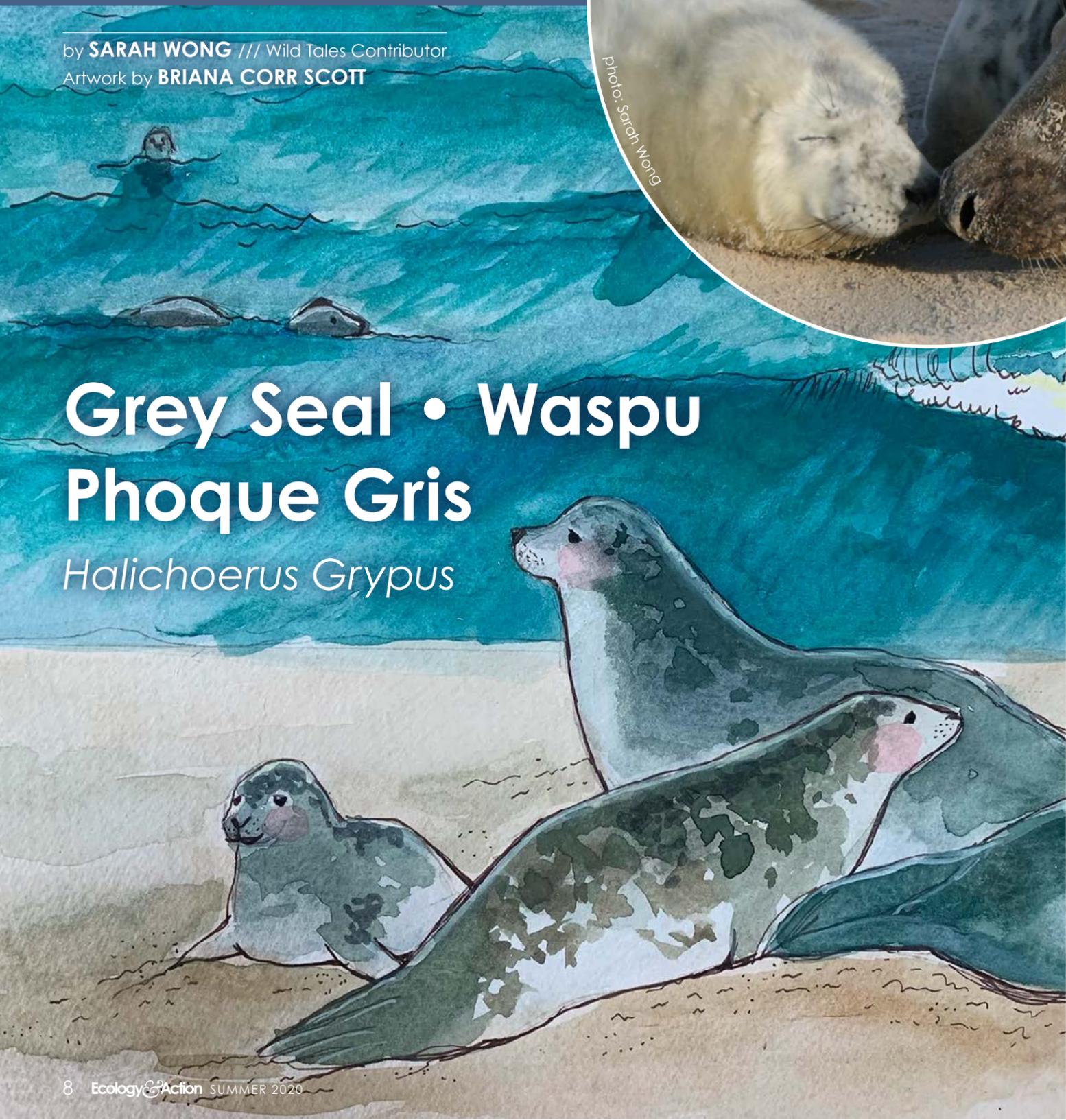
Wild Tales

SHARING ART AND STORIES ABOUT WILDLIFE IN MI'KMA'KI & THE MARITIMES

by **SARAH WONG** /// Wild Tales Contributor
Artwork by **BRIANA CORR SCOTT**



Grey Seal • Waspu Phoque Gris *Halichoerus Grypus*



I was back on Sable Island, helping with the Department of Fisheries and Ocean's grey seal research program. It was during the first few days of January. The island was packed with grey seals. There was a lot of snow that season. Over the last couple of weeks, females were dragging their large, pregnant, cumbersome bodies over the sand to give birth. Males were setting themselves up into strategic positions with only one thing on their minds: mate.

One large female had decided to pup next to our garage at East Light, the camp at the east end of the island where I was staying with three other researchers. For several days, we kept walking by her. She eventually stopped snarling at us. But she didn't stop snarling at any potential suitors. Late one afternoon, as the sun was setting and we had just returned after a full day of work, we saw she had just given birth. Her pup was wet and exhausted. She was also exhausted but alert. I stayed behind as the others returned to camp.

The female heaves herself towards her pup, lightly strokes him and scratches her belly, encouraging him to suckle. He is hungry but clumsy and awkward, and fumbles about, trying desperately to find her nipple. She lightly scratches him, he bumps into her, again and again, and she continues to scratch and lightly stroke him. And finally, he connects. And nurses. And she relaxes. Their first bonding moment. Female and pup. Mother and baby.

Wild Tales is an inclusive, community-based project that aims to connect people to wildlife through the sharing of scientific and cultural knowledge. It brings together people from all walks of life, encouraging them to share their experiences using different forms of creative expression. Wild Tales was created by Lindsay Wood, EAC volunteer and passionate conservationist from K'jipukuk/Halifax.

Read more stories at wildtalesproject.wixsite.com/blog or follow Wild Tales on Facebook or Instagram @wildtalesproject

Want to share your story? Send it to wildtalesproject@gmail.com



Just over two weeks pass and the pup packs on the pounds, while the female loses weight just as dramatically. She has allowed a large male to hang around the periphery for a couple of days now.

One afternoon, I came back to get some gear before heading out again. As I approached the cabin, I noticed the mother and pup exuberantly nuzzling each other. Rubbing their heads together, the mother sniffing him relentlessly. He curls up under her chin and she nuzzles him, and they touch noses and pause. And then repeat. I have never seen such prolonged affection. I can find no other way to describe it. I'm intruding on a special, tender moment.

When we get back that evening, the female is gone. Only her pup remains. He is weaned. He is on his own now. I think back to the scene several hours earlier. Was she saying goodbye? Were they enjoying one last moment together as mother and son? I'm anthropomorphizing. But I can't help it.

Ten months later, I give birth to my first baby. A boy. And like that seal pup, he is wet and exhausted and hungry but awkward and clumsy. And I'm also exhausted and trying to encourage him, but unlike that female grey seal, I don't know what I'm doing. But he eventually finds his own way and connects. And nurses. And I relax. Mother and baby. Female and pup. Grey seal and human.

Now that baby is four. And I think back to that female grey seal and her pup and their final goodbye. I am glad I have him much longer than 17 days. I am relieved to know that while there will come a time when he will be ready to strike out on his own, I will always be there for him.

Sarah Wong is a marine biologist who works with seabirds in Eastern Canada and the Arctic. She's a mom to two little boys.

Briana Corr Scott is an artist and illustrator who lives in Halifax/K'jipuktuk. Her work is inspired by a deep love of the natural world. These pieces are from her latest book *She dreams of Sable Island*.



Photo: Tristan Glenn

Urban Greenspace is Good for Us

by **PAIGE CROWELL** /// EAC Volunteer

Rather than the usual vernal flourish of activity, this spring saw the closure of municipal and provincial parks, trails, and beaches in Nova Scotia, including more than 900 parks and 425 km of trails in Halifax. Ironically, as urban greenspaces closed, social distancing, work-from-home orders, and the various pressures of COVID-19 spurred a desire in many people to seek refuge in nature. For city-dwellers, this highlighted something often taken for granted: urban greenspaces are good for us.

This is something many of us feel intuitively, and it's backed up by research too. Urban greenspaces have been repeatedly shown to provide broad environmental and health benefits. Recognizing this, more and more cities have turned an eye to greening urban landscapes as a matter of policy. However, as we look toward a "new normal," it will be necessary to carefully reflect on what the expansion of greenspaces could and should look like.

Public health and environmental benefits

The benefits of greenspaces to both physical and mental health are well documented. Access to urban greenspaces has been linked to improved immune system functioning, reduced risk of type 2 diabetes, childhood obesity, and stroke, and improved pregnancy outcomes. Noise reductions attributed to greenspaces can lead to improved sleep and reduced stress. A 2019 review in *The Lancet* found that access to greenspaces increased longevity and reduced premature mortality. Evidence also suggests that frequenting greenspaces may reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, and facilitate improved cognitive development in children. Community greenspace has also been shown to foster social relationships and a sense of inclusion and to decrease feelings of isolation.

In addition to public health benefits, greenspaces can also play a key role in urban sustainability through the ecosystem services that they provide. Greenspaces can lead to improved air quality, and the significant cooling effects of trees can mitigate the phenomenon of "heat islands" associated with urban centers. Trees can also offset climate change through carbon sequestration, and green infrastructure like rain gardens and urban forests can mitigate flooding and improve water quality.



Photo: Simon Ryder-Buribidge

TAKE ACTION

HRM will be consulting on their Regional Plan in the fall. Stay tuned for opportunities to speak up for inclusive urban greenspace.

Who benefits from these spaces?

The environmental and health benefits of greenspaces have led many cities to commit to expanding such areas. However, as we do so, it is important to consider who benefits from these new projects, how these benefits are distributed, and how to be proactive in addressing any potential negative side effects.

For example, underserved and marginalized communities generally have poorer access to quality greenspaces. As of 2017, only 76% of families in Canada with annual incomes below \$20,000 had access to a nearby park versus 91% of households with annual incomes between \$80,000 - \$100,000. This means that underserved communities disproportionately miss out on the health and social benefits offered by urban greenspaces. Ensuring inclusive design of greenspaces and removing barriers to access could not only lead to more equitable distribution of environmental and health benefits, it could help to alleviate the well-documented gap in health outcomes for underserved communities.

Beyond unequal distribution of benefits, introduction of greenspaces can potentially lead to what has been termed environmental or green gentrification. While increased property values are often touted as a benefit of greening, such outcomes can displace vulnerable residents. For example, the 2009 introduction of the High Line park in New York City saw a 103% increase in property value in the area over an eight-year period, squeezing out long-term residents and businesses. In Montreal, remediation and large-scale greening of contaminated sites in the Saint-Henri area has led to an influx of luxury housing, often to the detriment of low-income residents.

Further, the wholesale re-imagining of pre-existing landscapes can be detrimental to the social fabric of a community. For a stark example from here in Halifax, the community of Africville was forcibly relocated in the 1960's to make way for the MacKay Bridge – and much of the land where people had lived is now used for a dog park and greenspace. In order to be a positive initiative, greenspaces must be reflective and inclusive of the entire community in which they exist, and representative of those who use them.

The future is green

Of course, the potential for greenspace expansion to negatively affect current residents does not mean we should shy away from expanding greenspaces. Rather, we should be thoughtful in how we proceed. Greenspaces should be planned and developed in collaboration with existing communities through meaningful dialogue and collaboration, so as to be inclusive and reflective of the people living there and using the space. Further, development should aim to address the potential negative effects of such projects. For example, when Washington D.C. developed the 11th Street Bridge Park in 2011, in an area with historically high poverty and unemployment rates, they established an equitable development task force to help guide the project. The results of this task force included the incorporation of a community land-trust, pro-active community job training to ensure employment benefits from construction and ongoing maintenance of the park, and initiatives to preserve affordable housing in the area.

For many, the reopening of public parks, fields, gardens, paths, and trails has been a breath of fresh air. No doubt this has served as a keen reminder of the value in having access to quality urban greenspace, as asserted by countless studies linking greenspaces to improved health and environmental outcomes. While urban greenspaces have been shown to be environmentally beneficial and economically advantageous, it is paramount that we consider who benefits from existing and planned greenspaces, and how. As the easing of COVID-19 restrictions has seen residents trickle and flood back into greenspaces, this is a key opportunity to consider how we can make greenspaces work for all as an equitable and inclusive force for good in our communities.

Paige Crowell is a conservation biologist living in Halifax.



Hydrostone

In their own personal ways, Richard Nickerson's clients work hard to leave the world a better place than they found it. For many clients, this means investment decisions that support companies which act in accordance to that client's values. Richard is a socially responsible investor and he supports his clients in choosing high quality investments that align with their values.

LEARN MORE AT: assante.com/advisors/richardnickerson



As we build a community of active outdoor enthusiasts, we share and teach responsible outdoor recreation practices, stewarding a nation-wide appreciation and respect for the environment and increasing our access to wild forests, wetlands, mountains, urban parks, rivers, lakes and oceans where we pursue outdoor activities. We commit to conserving the ecologically and recreationally important places where we adventure and that sustain us.

FOR MORE INFO: mec.ca/community



We support the Ecology Action Centre because they have successfully demonstrated the connection between environmental issues, local communities and the local economy. That is why we donate \$ 500 every time an EAC member buys or sells a property using our services, helping to strengthen EAC's voice and impact. We're thankful to partner with EAC to help make this a better a world.

LEARN MORE AT: innovativerealestate.ca



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ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION

Focusing on ecological restoration and sustainable landscaping for public and private spaces using native species to strengthen our soils, forests and shorelines. Fostering a love for and connection to the planet that supports us all.

LEARN MORE AT: helpingnatureheal.com



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LEARN MORE AT: garrisonbrewing.com



SUSTAINABILITY ALLIES

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ecologyaction.ca/sustainabilityallies



Building Resilient Food Systems in Nova Scotia

Photo: Caroline Attwood

by **AIMEE GASPARATTO** /// EAC Staff

COVID-19 has both exposed and exacerbated the many gaps in our food system, making clear the lived realities of food insecurity among families in Nova Scotia. The pandemic has also highlighted the essential role played by our food producers and food workers, both in putting food on our tables and as part of Nova Scotia's economic engine. While these are not new challenges, they have taken on new significance and call for bold solutions.

Nova Scotians are already innovators, with many highly successful food-related initiatives rooted in our communities. Finding ourselves in the midst of a pandemic only sparked further creativity around how to ensure access to good food while also supporting our local producers and businesses in a time of great need. Upon the closure of public markets, initiatives such as the Halifax Mobile Food Market, Square Roots, and Dartmouth North Community Food Centre quickly adapted and expanded their services to get food out to people and organizations who could safely distribute it. Farmer's Markets of Nova Scotia coordinated the creation of

online markets, quickly linking people to local food sources and potentially influencing a new wave of consumer behavior that could last beyond the pandemic. In an effort to reach isolated individuals and families, Feed Nova Scotia mobilized community infrastructure to establish a home delivery service. These initiatives, among countless others, demonstrated what is possible when well-networked organizations are adequately resourced and backed by political will and social determination. The question before us now is this: **How might these swift, short-term responses lead to deeper transformation of our food systems in Nova Scotia?**

In facilitating Nova Scotia's economic recovery, we have a unique opportunity to invest in our local food system to achieve multiple interlocking aims: reducing food insecurity and inequities, supporting clean and inclusive growth, and increasing sustainable employment. To achieve this, solutions must build on the expertise of farmers and fishers as well as community organisations and food networks, with the goal of promoting resilience in communities and in food systems.

Food system improvements can span a wide spectrum of approaches, from income supports, to food distribution and waste reduction. Here are three focus areas that we feel are ripe for action in Nova Scotia:

- 1 Re-localize our food system:**
Imagine a robust system of local food processing and distribution across Nova Scotia. This network of regional food infrastructure would shorten supply chains and strengthen linkages between local food producers and regional markets. Regional food centres are a part of the "middle infrastructure" and play an integral role in supporting primary producers to expand production and cultivate more stable markets, including wholesale, retail, and institutional buyers. A strong network helps to connect the dots between local supply and regional demand.
- 2 Invest in community food infrastructure:**
Picture farmers markets, local food hubs, and community food centres in every community. These spaces provide community members with diverse avenues not only to access food, but also to engage in programs and services that enhance food literacy education and social connectivity around food. Community food assets such as collective kitchen and garden spaces provide physical places for people to connect over diverse food experiences such as community meals, urban agriculture, and organizing food advocacy efforts. Community food infrastructure requires staff and volunteers to build community networks, deliver programs, and support a range of community led food initiatives.
- 3 Strengthen the social infrastructure around food:**
While "social infrastructure" may be an unfamiliar term to some, it is an essential ingredient for building strong local food systems. It refers to social connections, relationships, and partnerships between individuals and organizations within and across communities. These relationships and networks focus on enhancing the formal and informal linkages that help to coordinate efforts, support inclusive engagement, and harness diverse skill sets and expertise that can respond to our evolving needs. Above all, it is through these relationships that we deepen our collective skills in connecting and collaborating across difference to address complex social challenges.

TAKE ACTION

Public consultations are coming up this fall to inform Halifax's Food Action Plan. Keep your eye on the Halifax Food Policy Alliance website at halifaxfoodpolicy.ca to find out how you can add your voice in calling for a food-resilient future!



Photo: Georgia MacNeill

If there is one thing that the pandemic has taught us, it's that our communities can adapt in the face of adversity and are a creative force to drive meaningful change. It has also shone new light on major societal issues such as food insecurity, leaving many of us asking one very important question: what would it look like to build back better? In the case of our food system, it's up to all of us to articulate and realize this vision. Will we build a food system in which all Nova Scotians can access healthy and local food, where the livelihoods of farmers and fishers is celebrated, and where food becomes a driving force behind our social, economic, and ecological prosperity? It is up to us to decide.

Aimee Gasparatto is the Senior Coordinator of Community Food at the EAC.

Degrowth

FEAR NOT, WELLBEING WITHOUT ECONOMIC GROWTH IS POSSIBLE

by **JESSE GALATI** /// EAC Volunteer

Have you ever measured your footprint?

I'm sure you know your shoe size, but what about your Ecological Footprint? It's easy to calculate by visiting the **Global Footprint Networks** website. The earth can regenerate a certain amount of its natural resources every year. Your footprint is calculated based on your car and plane usage, where your food comes from, what percentage of renewable energy your house uses, and so forth. When you take the test, it shows how many Earths we would need if everyone lived your lifestyle. It also helps you explore options to help reduce your impact.

Every year the Global Footprint Network announces Earth Overshoot Day. This day marks the point when we have globally used up more natural resources than can be regenerated in a year. In 1971 Earth Overshoot Day was December 2. In 2017, it was August 2, and by 2019 it had moved up to July 29.

These numbers tell a story of accelerated over-exploitation of our planet.

While the options for individual action offered by the Global Footprint site can be powerful, we need to look more deeply at how our economic system is driving this over-exploitation. In its simplest terms, Gross Domestic Product is all the goods and services traded in a year. Let's think about what goes into a GDP calculation: it is easy to give a value to a car, but it is harder to quantify the value of things like mental health benefits of going for a hike or CO2 absorption in wetlands. These things are not captured by GDP because their value is intrinsic and not based on their ability to be exploited for economic growth.

Our current economic system expects that GDP should grow and grow forever, and that any disruption of this growth is a sign of a weak economy. However, infinite growth cannot happen within a finite system. There is a significant correlation between GDP, consumption of resources, and greenhouse gas emissions. When we deplete our supply of natural resources, we tend to see our GDP rise. When we focus on growing GDP exponentially without

concern for social and ecological bottom lines, our planet suffers. There needs to be a better way. Our economy, like everything else, needs to balance its growth and degrowth as part of a cycle.

The concept of degrowth has been around for decades. Now the idea is gaining traction as more and more people understand that there are planetary and atmospheric limits that we must live within. Degrowth is not just an economic philosophy; its goals are a holistic, sustainable approach to society and how we should treat our environment. This approach includes a deliberate shrinking of production and consumption and the reuse of material to create a sustainable ecosystem and culture.

The first International Degrowth Conference in 2008 brought together thinkers, academics, activists, and community groups. Together, they defined degrowth as a "voluntary transition towards a just, participatory, and ecologically sustainable society." It is about 'right-sizing' our economic models, finding ways to prosper and thrive staying within our planetary boundaries and finally admitting that the 'infinite growth' assumption upon which our current economic system rests is just not possible.

The goal of degrowth isn't to abandon money and the market entirely in favour of some utopian commune. Degrowth is dynamic and evolving - it can look and act differently depending on how we use it. But at its core, it is about prioritizing the well-being of our environment over exponential profit. While degrowth has been



LEARN MORE!

Check out these resources for further reading:

- Prosperity without Growth: Economics for a Finite Planet, by Tim Jackson

- Managing without Growth: Slower by Design, not Disaster, by Peter A. Victor
- Degrowth Institute - degrowth.org

called radical, today we may be closer than ever to understanding that infinite growth based on finite resources is the more radical fantasy.

The COVID-19 pandemic is prompting a reevaluation of how our economies function, as thousands are out of work and many forms of production and consumption have been shut down. But let's be clear - the pandemic is not an example of degrowth, it is an example of a growth crisis. When our economies can't grow for a couple of months, it becomes a crisis. As we recover from the pandemic and grapple with the intensifying impacts of climate change, this is the moment we must innovate and shift our economic models.

The degrowth movement itself needs to start from grassroots and individual communities working together to reduce waste and reuse materials, decrease our dependence on natural resource extraction, and allow ecosystems to regenerate. Many companies are already shifting toward a circular business model where products can be repaired, extracting maximum value out of a product before it is repurposed for something else. The clothing brand Patagonia offers DIY tutorials to fix torn clothing articles and sources their material ethically. Furniture giant Ikea has committed to becoming completely circular: by 2030 all their furniture will be designed to be repaired and resold, and will be built from more sustainable materials.

A degrowth economy won't happen overnight, but now is the moment to take steps toward a better future. We are already seeing

a push for some of the key mechanisms that support a degrowth economy, such as Universal Basic Income. Calls for governments to #BuildBackBetter are demanding that we fund the pandemic recovery in a way that supports our communities and ecosystems, rather than returning to an oppressive status quo. Increasing numbers of citizens are participating in social change movements, from racial justice and migrant rights to Indigenous sovereignty and climate action. Our societies are hungry for radical change.

This is the time to act. Let's refocus our attention on imagining alternatives to endless economic growth based on the exploitation of people and the planet. Let's work on valuing our environment for its own sake. We can commit to salvaging and maintaining our ecosystems. It's clear that there is enough wealth: it is the distribution of wealth that is the issue, and this is something we have the power to solve.

Fixing this will not come from some divine politician acting as our saviour. It is a movement that starts in the grassroots, with individuals and organizations turning their energy and creativity towards shifting our world to something that can sustain us, and demanding more from the leaders who represent us. Can you picture it?

Jesse Galati is Human Geographer, who has dedicated his life to protecting our wildlands.

Action is our Middle Name

WILDERNESS

Last fall, everyone waited with bated breath to see if the Premier would stand by the Boat Harbour Act, and whether 50+ years of environment degradation and racism would finally end. It seems that, for now, effluent will stop flowing into A'sek, but the battle to protect and restore the waters and people of the Northumberland Strait continues. The Province will still entertain a proposal to put a big, polluting pipe into the fastest warming waters in Canada. We continue to fight to save the Strait and the forests of Nova Scotia, working alongside Pictou Landing First Nation, fishermen, communities, and conservationists.

There were some wins for protected areas in fall 2019: 17 new provincial protected areas were announced as officially protected, with 10 more pending. There's still more work to do though, so EAC's Wilderness Team will keep pushing the Province to reach 13% protection of our shared land, and then go beyond that.

There are still opportunities to protect intact nature, even close to city centres. In February we helped community groups in Halifax push for more protection of wild lands at Sandy Lake and Sackville River. As part of the campaign we delivered hand-made valentines to city councillors, which conveyed the love that many people have for the area and their desire for an expanded Sandy Lake Park. More than 350 EAC members and other wilderness supporters sent "online valentines" to express their devotion to securing more parkland while we have the chance.

The Owls Head saga continues, despite clear and public evidence that the area should be legally protected as a park and that provincial decision-makers took steps to "de-list" and sell it in secret. EAC partnered with the local Save Owls Head group to lead a rally at the provincial legislature, where decision-makers from all parties heard us loud and clear: "Stop the sale, protect Owls Head, we're watching yoouuu!"

COASTAL & WATER

2020 Campaign to Protect Our Coast

Since December 2019, the Coastal Team has received numerous calls and emails from citizens in coastal communities around the province, expressing concerns about inappropriate coastal developments being proposed in their regions. We've heard about building permit applications for large developments squeezed into tiny lots, without adequate setbacks or vertical allowances to allow structures to be safe, and about rock walls well below the high-water mark. The Coastal Team has been collecting information on these cases as well as reaching out to planning offices and municipal decision makers and to NS Environment inspectors to shine a spotlight on these issues. This period before the proclamation of Nova Scotia's Coastal Protection Act (currently in the regulation development stage) will require extra efforts to mitigate the risk of inappropriate coastal developments seeking permits before the Act comes into force. Accordingly, the team has begun work on a campaign to remind Nova Scotians about the risks of coastal climate change and the costs and danger associated with inappropriate coastal development. As a part of this work, we are collaborating with East Coast Environmental Law to create an updated citizen's handbook/checklist to help folks in reporting concerns along the water's edge in their communities.

We are also working hard to make information about coastal climate change and coastal adaptation options more easily accessible to coastal communities. In June 2020, we began a webinar series focused on coastal adaptation options. Our team is developing fact sheets and other tools to spread the information and engage Nova Scotia's coastal communities in discussions about risk and about what must be done to adapt to coastal climate change.

TRANSPORTATION

Pedal On!

During the challenges of the COVID pandemic, the Transportation team adapted some of our programs to better support communities during this time. Our Bike Again! collective developed a Pedal Through the Pandemic initiative to provide refurbished bikes and new accessories to those that needed accessible, socially-distanced means of transportation. Likewise, Welcoming Wheels continues to provide bikes and accessories to the newcomer community, and the Pop-Up Bike Hub has launched! Similar to Bike Again, the Pop-Up Bike Hub provides the space, tools, and the know-how you need to fix your bike yourself. During the pandemic, this DIY mobile bike shop has supported under-served and marginalized communities by providing free 20-minute tune-ups. With successful pilots in Clayton Park, Millbrook First Nation and Pictou Landing First Nation, we plan to expand to other communities throughout the summer.

We have been adapting much of our programming to be accessible online. We partnered with HRM to create Making Tracks bike safety videos so resources could be utilized remotely. We developed four Active Alliance online toolkits (Mobility Audits, Bike Corrals, Open Streets & Developing an AT Plan) and co-hosted an AT Townhall on Zoom to listen to the challenges and needs resulting from COVID-19 facing communities working on active transportation. And Urban Cycling 101 is now also available online, for adults (16+) who can ride a bike but want to deepen their skills for riding in an urban setting. You can register and find info here: cyclehalifax.ca/urban-cycling-course.

On the policy side, we were pleased to see the federal government announce plans to develop a National Active Transportation (AT) Strategy, an action the EAC and many partners have pushed for. The EAC has also been advocating for a zero-emission vehicle mandate and developed a modelling report that demonstrates the impact of a provincial policy for electric vehicles to accelerate the adoption of EVs in NS.

Our annual Winter Walk Day event (pre-COVID) for NS schools to get outside and enjoy a safe walk had its highest numbers ever – 21,500 students across NS participating from 117 schools.

Action is our Middle Name

MARINE

Ocean action and recent victories

In an effort to protect critical offshore habitat, the EAC's Marine team has partnered with Ecojustice, WWF-Canada and Sierra Club Canada to challenge the legality of Canada's new regional assessment process for oil and gas exploration at sea.

We have also launched a petition with our partners at SeaChoice calling on the federal government to implement a boat-to-plate traceability program for seafood in Canada. By tracking how and where a seafood product was caught or farmed, such a program could vastly improve seafood sustainability at the grocery store, and reduce instances of mislabeling.

Finally, two big victories in the spring: (1) After intense opposition and campaigning from communities in the Healthy Bays Network, Cermaq-Canada abandoned their plans to develop a series of open net-pen salmon operations in Nova Scotia; and (2) the Canadian government finally established new prohibitions against the retention of endangered Mako sharks – an issue we have been working on for years, and a huge step for shark conservation in Canada!

ENERGY

The Energy Team is continuing to work on many fronts for a low-carbon future. We are campaigning to limit the expansion of offshore oil and gas, and to shift the provincial focus toward investing in low-carbon industries and to supporting workers and communities with this transition. We continue to be engaged in ensuring that the strong climate goals will be well-regulated through the Sustainable Development Goals Act. Additionally, the NS Power Integrated Resource Planning stakeholder discussions are in full swing, which has given our Energy team, alongside experts and key stakeholders, the opportunity to draw deeper analysis on NS Power's energy plans from now until 2050. Through our strong recommendations, we are pushing for an accelerated phase-out of coal. Finally, a Low Carbon Communities Grant from the NS Department of Energy and Mines is allowing us to explore net zero energy-ready retrofits in affordable multi-unit residential buildings. This project, called Whole Housing Energy Retrofit Envelope Nova Scotia (WHERE NS), will provide new efficient ways of completing deep energy retrofits to decrease energy consumption for people living in affordable housing.

As always, we are super appreciative of the dedicated volunteers of our Energy Action Team, who were a crucial support in carrying this work as we transitioned to new staff members on the team!

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

A spotlight on just and livable cities

Changes to way-of-life since the state of emergency have brought additional attention to cities and settlement patterns. The Built Environment team celebrated as Halifax Regional Municipality unanimously approved HalifACT, the municipality's first comprehensive climate change action plan. The EAC worked with HRM, alongside other stakeholders, to inform the plan, which was released with ambitious targets, including those for building efficiency. The unanimous support of the plan was a win, yet our work will not be complete until we see a committed implementation and financing plan. We are staying tuned. Another moment of escalation this month occurred as HRM approved an investigation into the rezoning of an at-risk piece of land in the Purcell's Cove Backlands.

As the spotlight moves to the livability of our cities, we are working hard to ensure that cities grow strategically. The Urban Development Advocacy Team and Our HRM Alliance, two groups coordinated by Built Environment, quickly adapted to online meetings and continue to be hard at work moving forward campaigns, learning through webinars, and staying connected.

FOOD

Reflecting on the Our Food Project, and new hope for food system resilience

The winter and spring for EAC's food team have been bittersweet. Over these months, food staff located across Nova Scotia and Southeast New Brunswick have been reflecting on the seven years of work and impact of the Our Food Project (OFP) – an initiative that ended in March 2020, but leaves behind a strong legacy of partnerships, projects, and positive food systems change across two provinces. As OFP wound down, our ongoing partnership with the Mobile Food Market (MFM) was taken to new heights in the face of COVID-19. During the first wave of the pandemic, MFM distributed 4200 produce packs, 1100 emergency food hampers, and \$32,500 in grocery gift cards to people needing extra food supports. And in April, Halifax Council unanimously approved a motion for a one-time contribution towards the purchase of a vehicle - a success that will allow MFM to expand its capacity significantly. Great news!! Similarly, our work with the Halifax Food Policy Alliance to build a Food Action Plan for the Halifax Region gained renewed traction as both the need and urgency of investing in more resilient and regionally based food systems has become apparent to many. We're looking forward to the road ahead, and to speaking with diverse community voices about their vision for food across our region.

The Seasonal Gourmet

by **CHAITI SETH** /// EAC Volunteer

This recipe was originally submitted for our Spring 2020 issue – but it looked so tasty, we wanted to share it with you! Save this for next spring when you're clearing out your winter pantries of hearty winter vegetables.

Springtime Tacos

This is a simple recipe that is on regular rotation on our winter and spring home menu. It balances the hearty creaminess of winter vegetables with the brightness and crunch of the cabbage slaw—a welcome reminder of spring and all the green bounty to come! This is an easy meal to pull together for a weeknight supper and fun to assemble to each person's liking at the table. Double the quantities for versatile and quick-to-assemble weekday lunches.

INGREDIENTS

1 large sweet potato, diced into ½" cubes (or swap with carrots or parsnips)

1 cup dried black beans, soaked overnight and cooked until soft

1-2 tsp chilli powder

1-2 tsp chipotle in adobo sauce (or replace with 1-2 tsp. smoked paprika)

1 tsp ground cumin

3 cloves garlic, minced

½ cup feta, crumbled

8 soft corn or wheat tortillas

1 medium purple cabbage, thinly sliced

1 tbsp apple cider vinegar

1 tsp maple syrup

Salt

Optional add-ons: tomato or tomatillo salsa, Greek yogurt, pea shoots or sprouts, cilantro

DIRECTIONS

- 1** Soak black beans for 8 hours or overnight. Cook with plenty of water in a tightly sealed saucepan or pressure cooker until soft.
- 2** Preheat oven to 400°F. Toss cubed sweet potato with a little oil and salt, spread on a baking sheet, and roast in the oven until soft, about 15-20 minutes.
- 3** While the beans and sweet potato are cooking, prepare the cabbage slaw. Add cider vinegar, maple syrup, and a pinch of salt to thinly sliced cabbage, and let it rest for the flavours to meld.
- 4** Once the beans are cooked, drain excess water, then add cumin, chipotle/ paprika, chilli powder, garlic, and salt to taste. Mix well, mashing lightly with the back of the spoon.
- 5** Warm tortillas on a skillet or in a toaster oven. Serve roasted sweet potatoes, black beans, cabbage slaw, feta, and any additional toppings in separate bowls and let everyone assemble their own!

Chaiti Seth is an avid home gardener and cook who loves to grow and eat food! She works on helping build healthy and sustainable local food systems near Wolfville, Nova Scotia.



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“The Ecology Action Centre is incredibly important to the environmental health of Nova Scotia and to the people who live here. Over the years it has build a reputation for integrity and unrivaled research and work on ecological issues. My gift, I hope, will ensure it continues this work for many, many years in the future.”

– *Cliff White*