

Ecology & Action

FALL 2016



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Poetry of the Land



Wapska Oohoo



Art vs Oil

VOL. 34 NO. 3

PM 4005 0204 | ISSN 2369-5943

A publication of



Ecology Action Centre

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Printed at Halcraft Printers on Chorus Art Paper, 50% recycled fibre, 25% post-consumer with vegetable based inks.

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



Ecology Action Centre

The EAC's vision is of a society in Nova Scotia that respects and protects nature and provides environmentally and economically sustainable solutions for its citizens. The EAC is a founding member of the Canadian and Nova Scotia Environmental Networks. Views expressed in *Ecology & Action* are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent the EAC or its supporters.

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Letters

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To the Centre

The cover on the latest issue of the Ecology and Action (Summer 2016) reminded me how hopeless it is to think that Halifax would ever even faintly resemble something like that. While eating outside at a restaurant on Argyle Street, instead of enjoying your meal peacefully in the late afternoon sun, one sits in the shade of a colossal monstrosity, where even at noon there would be no sun, while enduring the noise and exhaust of cars and motorcycles continually going past on a street that should be closed to traffic. Then there is the harbourfront where there could be grass and trees but instead there are parking lots and, on the boardwalk itself, temporary kiosks that are lined up to make the boardwalk so congested that it is not even pleasant to walk there on the weekend. As for safe bicycling, it is all but non-existent, hardly encouraging anyone to cycle. Instead we have the ever flowing traffic of single people in cars and the demand for wider roads. Halifax, unfortunately, is a city/town of people addicted to their cars and where business trumps all.

Peter Nelson, Halifax.

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Art vs Oil

by IAN JOHNSTON /// Editorial Committee Volunteer

“If people really believed in what they did, and went to battle for the things that they believed in there would be a change.”

- Peter Von Tiesenhausen



PHOTOS: Peter Von Tiesenhausen

Demmitt, Alberta, sits near the border of British Columbia. It's over 500 kilometres northwest of Edmonton. It's a hamlet, with a population of around thirty people – one of whom is Peter von Tiesenhausen. Peter lives near his childhood home, now with his own wife and children. He is an artist, and his art is intertwined with his land. We spoke about art and oil, and about living authentically to stand up for what you believe in.

The Lifeline Fence

Twenty-seven years ago Peter quit his job for art. His first, and still ongoing, project is the lifeline fence. It's a white picket fence, built in eight-foot sections, where one section is constructed a year. Once a section is primed and painted it isn't maintained. Over time the elements of nature mark it. If a tree falls and breaks a section, he'll remove the tree, but the fence never gets repaired. It doesn't enclose anything. It isn't meant to be a barrier.

“What I didn't realize until I started building it, was that it was a commitment to stay here the rest of my life,” said Peter. “That just changes your perspective on everything.”

He took up long-term planning.

“If I plant an apple tree now, maybe I'll be able to harvest it when I'm ninety. I asked myself, 'what kind of community do I want to live in?'" Peter started building a community centre with the purpose of trying to attract the kind of individuals he wanted to be surrounded by in his old age.

Oil

Before the oil industry boomed there wasn't much of anything in, or around, Demmitt. Peter grew up hearing “if you build a house out there, you'd better like it, because you would never sell it.” Oil changed the landscape in Alberta, and around Demmitt it was no different. Twenty years ago, an oil company first approached Peter. The company wanted to build pipelines across his property. He declined. But Oil is big money, and not easily dissuaded.

The company threatened to build the pipelines across his land without permission. “It was Alberta,” they said, “and they could legally expropriate his land.” Peter asked “Why should a person's endeavours, be they artistic or otherwise, be trumped by the endeavours of a corporation?" His land was filled with his art. The lifeline fence was not just on the land; it was a part of it. Where did it end? Peter claimed copyright of his art, which included his land. He never had to file papers or confer with a lawyer.

Suddenly, these offers started increasing. However, it was never about money. Peter was doing what he thought was right. Money though, was the language the company understood. So the artist came up with another idea. He started charging company representatives \$500 per hour to meet with him, though he had no plan to change his answer. Eventually the stream of offers dried up, and the pipeline was rerouted around Peter's property.

This wasn't Peter's only run in with Big Oil. Another company started developing on his land without permission. He said, "I had warned them ahead of time, and they removed a few trees and some brush. I documented it. They made light of it, and so we took it to court, or we were about to take it to court, and about two minutes before, they called me and said they 'submitted to my terms.'" Word seems to have gotten around that Peter will not be moved. A chance encounter on a plane beside a fellow from the oil industry revealed insider knowledge of a 'crazy guy living out in Demmitt.' Apparently the oil industry had drawn a red line around his property. Peter didn't mention his identity on the flight.

The Demmitt Community Centre

The Demmitt Community Centre is a sustainable building made of local and ecologically friendly materials. It was a labour of love for Peter, his wife Teresa, and many volunteers. For Peter, it was an investment in the community. From every standpoint, though, it made no sense. It was a multi-million dollar project in a hamlet of 30 people – half of whom were against its creation. Yet it was established.

"The place is flourishing, and it's in the middle of nowhere," said Peter. "The nearest village of 700 people is 13 miles away. It's in a deserted valley, and the place is sustainable by just having events. It's completely paid for, and it can last for three hundred years instead of the usual thirty or forty for these buildings." Currently it hosts many events such as weddings and concerts, and is the home base for several local organizations.

The sustainable construction is environmentally sound. Beetles were killing local trees, so they used the dead trees before they could rot. Straw bales for the walls were easy to get from nearby farms. Even the toilets were composting, thus eliminating the expense of hauling sewage. Recently, the centre added solar panels, so the building now produces all its power.

Peter was engaged with the project for four years, and it was fought on all fronts. Peter shared a story of how the project was almost sunk at the last second. There was a deadline for funding requiring occupancy, and it was a month away. The building inspector, however, wasn't going to give them occupancy. Peter remembers talking to the inspector: "You're going to use this tiny community as an example, even though these same composting toilets exist in other public buildings in this province. You're saying in this particular jurisdiction, we can't have them. And he said 'that's right.' This was a Friday, and I was livid. On Monday morning, this guy was not only unemployed, but the company that had existed, Permit Pro, that had been a huge Alberta based company, was bankrupt. And they just disappeared. Now who could have imagined that? That something like that could happen right out of the blue? And the next building permit guy gave us our occupancy."



LEARN MORE

- Peter von Tiesenhausen: tiesenhausen.net
- The Demmitt Cultural Centre: manascisaac.com/work/demmitt-cultural-centre

The Fence Doesn't End

Peter didn't set out to stand up to the oil industry. He did what he felt was right. He wanted a sustainable community centre because of his values and what he thought it could bring to his community. He says he thinks in the long term, and sees a danger in our shortsighted, instantly gratified culture. His efforts have been "an investment in existence on this planet. Not an investment in a bank account."

Even with the recent politics in the United States, and ever-alarming news about the environment, he remains optimistic. "We have no idea what could happen," he said. "We forge ahead – even though something looks like a done deal, or impossible, you do it anyway. You can be amazed at what's feasible that looks impossible. And if it looks like it's completely hopeless in the world, we have no idea what might occur that might change all the circumstances."

With an eclectic background, **Ian Johnston** has written on diverse topics including literature, real estate, executive leadership and mental health. He received a Master of Arts from The University of Western Ontario, and a Master of Education from The University of Ottawa. He lives in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia.

For the Love of Water

by **SIMON GREENLAND-SMITH** /// Volunteer

Travelling is an eye-opening experience and my recent trip to Europe was no exception. In comparison with Nova Scotia, the built infrastructure of Europe is ancient, littered with Roman ruins and historic city walls and churches. Despite the beautiful buildings, the development plans of European cities like Ljubljana, Slovenia have an obvious focus — water.

European towns required water from the get-go. Whether it was travel, commerce or fire prevention, water was key to a successful city. Nowadays, rivers and canals are the centre of gathering places and tourist hot-spots. In Ljubljana, Slovenia — European Green Capital 2016 — opposing sides of the Ljubljana River are scattered with restaurants and cafes. It's a stunning place to be, both aesthetically and culturally. Ljubljana roughly translated means love. Love, literally and figuratively, flows through the centre of the city in the form of water.

The amazing urban space created in Ljubljana was not achieved without work. Like many urban downtowns problematic issues like traffic, pollution and a lack of respect for the Ljubljana River abounded. But they capitalized on opportunities as they came — sometimes taking chances — but always betting on people. They invested in creating people-focused spaces around a healthier river and transformed their city in the process.

Closer to home there are opportunities in front of us. This coming year Halifax Water will be replacing a 45-year-old culvert that channels the Sawmill River underground from Sullivan's Pond to the harbour. Fish passage is required with this upgrade and so Halifax Water has two options: replace the culvert and add lighting to increase the success of the fish passage, or bring the culvert to the surface, opening the top to create an exposed river to sunlight. This latter option would create conditions more akin to a natural Sawmill River. Since this stretch of river has not seen daylight in decades, it has prevented Atlantic salmon, gaspereau, trout and eels from passing through. These ecologically important species could help rejuvenate the ecosystems in lakes Banook and Micmac, making them healthier, more diverse ecosystems.

Sign the Sawmill River petition at ecologyaction.ca/civicrm/petition/sign?sid=1



An example of a daylight river in Rijeka, Croatia which has trout, visible from the bridge and other areas, swimming throughout. PHOTO: Simon Greenland-Smith

The pride surrounding the Sava River was palpable in the cities I visited. Even a pair of Croatians on a train were eager to share the history of the Sava. It is a river that runs from the mountains in Slovenia to Belgrade where it meets the Danube. It has played a role in wars, border-making and economics. Each time it reaches the urban areas of Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade it becomes the focal point of that city. Community and culture surround and intermingle with the natural beauty of the river. These areas are cherished and protected as much as possible.

This type of pride reminded me of Dartmouth's pride in its freshwater. Dartmouth is the "City of Lakes" and freshwater is engrained in the culture of Dartmouth in a way that is unique to Nova Scotia. Freshwater rivers and lakes are at the forefront of what Dartmouth is all about, and now is the opportunity to ensure that the importance Dartmouthians put on water is elevated and respected.

During the Switch Dartmouth event in June 2016, Dartmouth residents expressed incredible support for daylighting the Sawmill River. It's time for the people of Dartmouth and the wider HRM to seize the opportunities before us by actively supporting the daylighting of the Sawmill River. A 'daylit' Sawmill River could provide a focal point to the downtown of Dartmouth, attracting visitors from away, but also re-establishing the benefits of visible freshwater in the urban core. Let's take a page out of the book of some great European cities and make the best of the coming opportunity.

Simon Greenland-Smith is a volunteer on the Sawmill River daylighting campaign and enjoys travelling during brief but frequent periods of unemployment.

The Aesthetics of Rain

“Everything has beauty but not everyone sees it.”
- Confucius

by **JOSÉE-ANN CLOUTIER** /// Volunteer

This past summer I had the opportunity to tour rain gardens around Halifax and to help evaluate and maintain the rain garden at the George Dixon Centre as part of work being done by the Coastal and Water team at the EAC. Since then, I have been contemplating the aesthetic of rain gardens and how they contribute to both ecological and human health.

First, I wondered about the visual appreciation of rain gardens and how they may be perceived. Are they noticed by the people passing by and how could their design and care influence this? Second, I wondered if having an understanding of their ecological benefits, such as mitigating water pollution, increasing pollinators, and adding beauty through the sensorial display of greenery, plants, flowers and soil, could influence their presence and sense of appreciation?

Rain gardens have a function and provide an ecological aesthetic. They hold an array of diverse plants, shrubs, native flowers, and trees as a bioretention system where 50 percent of the plants remove contaminants from stormwater. Imagine Halifax back before the rise of industrial urbanization in the 1800s, a place of forests, wetlands, and meadows. Where pavement, buildings, and sprawl had not yet spread. Instead there was a massive ecological sponge of soils, roots and plants capturing rain and great snow melts that filtered purifying water into the groundwater. That same filtered water would flow into surrounding lakes, rivers, streams, and also into the harbour.

Fast forward to today, with urbanized development and loss of green spaces and ground, paved roads and parking lots, less exposed soil to absorb runoff, allowing stormwater to collect pollutants and chemicals and carry them into waterways negatively impacting the watershed's health. Alternatively, stormwater runoff reaches the sewers and heads to the water treatment facilities that are also quite costly to operate.

Integrating diverse preventative measures such as rain gardens is beneficial. Rain gardens improve water quality, recharge local

The rain garden at the George Dixon Community Centre.
PHOTO: Josée-Ann Cloutier

groundwater, filter pollution and protect waterways. They also prevent flooding and drainage problems, reduce mosquito breeding, create habitat for pollinators, and could help redirect ground moisture from our damp and moldy basements and buildings (a major environmental health issue).

An aesthetic experience is an important initial spark that engages humans to connect with nature. Although beauty is in the eye of the beholder, aesthetic has the power to awaken and inspire the senses to value green spaces in urban contexts.

Aesthetic experience, according to Paul H. Gobster, can be either pleasurable or unpleasant “triggered by affective emotion based processes which is shaped by evolved biochemical, physiological, and psychological capacities and predispositions.” Feeling, appreciating, and understanding function and ecological process together is a sensible balanced view. However, there is the possibility for potential harm when human aesthetics and the ecological necessity don't match up. For example, bogs and marshes are rich in ecological health but may not be aesthetically pleasing by those who don't understand their function and purpose. Similarly, green fields and pastures may be perceived as beautiful but may be unhealthy and lack biodiversity.

My summer, with its stormwater management tours and visits to the rain garden at George Dixon, was an excellent way to be inspired by human design interventions for beautification projects in urban cities. Rain gardens are a highly valuable service to public well-being for all the reasons mentioned. They can easily fade in the background in our busy human dominated landscapes. As such, an emphasis could be placed on making rain gardens more attractive to make them more visible and inspire action and care. Perhaps also including a form of human engagement within them too. This in turn has the power to inspire more rain gardens, shifting policy, that moves towards a vision of creating a more beautiful healthy vibrant place to live and enjoy in the city.

Josée-Ann Cloutier has traveled around the world exploring water and other elements in relationship to health and community for over a decade as a heart led path to creating opportunities for connection and restoration. She's a health and wellness professional, bodyworker, and educator. Josée-Ann is currently learning to ride Nova Scotia's entrepreneurial waves to further share her passion and worldly experiences.

Wapska Oohoo

by DYLAN LETENDRE /// Volunteer

There was a time, my people did not read or write. Actually, that's not true. They read the laws and teachings of Kitchi Manitou in the world around them, and they wrote themselves into the hearts of the people close to them.

It was dark outside. Tipiskaw. The nighttime. There was a dusky grassy field to the left of the faint road we followed. To our right was deep, dark forest. I was eight years old and afraid of what might roam in that forest at night. Nohkumak had always told me that this was the time of the night spirits, who balance daytime spirits like us and do not like to be disturbed.

But tonight my family had made an exception. We were leaving a special nighttime ceremony on Muskoday Cree First Nation, not far from our Saskatchewan home. I could see the path of our headlights push away the darkness as we crept along the path, when suddenly out of that blackness we came upon a pure white Owl. Wapska Oohoo.

The Owl did not fly away as we approached, but sat looking directly at us until we honked. We kept driving, and as I watched the path of our headlights, again we came upon this Owl, her dark eyes fixated on each of our own. The adults in the car spoke to each other about how strange this was and honked. Again the Owl flew away.

I heard my mother say that this was strange behaviour for an owl as we again continued along the bumpy makeshift road. When the Owl appeared directly in our path again for a third time I was mesmerized. By the fourth time the Owl was staring intently and would not budge. My mother carefully got out of the car and, as Nimusom had taught her, made an offering of Stimaw to the Owl. When she finished praying, the Owl flew away, and we drove home uninterrupted. We returned to a message that someone close had passed away unexpectedly earlier that night.

As I flew into Halifax from Saskatoon early this January, I felt tired. Not from the traveling, but because I had spent most of my break on schoolwork instead of spending quality time with my family. And from months of trying to juggle work, academics, and working to support indigenous students going to university. I was tired as well from the pervasive racism that exists in my hometown of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Luckily I was able to build some strength and resilience through family conversations about our traditions and culture, and our shared agreement that we have a responsibility to create a safe space for future generations of our people, Lii Michif.

I have come to know all too well the precarious nature of our traditions following the Residential School era, the 60s Scoop, and the denigration of our ceremonies by Canadian society at large. To me they are not obsolete relics of the past as I too often hear. I attribute my personal resilience, successes, and well-being to the traditional environment in which my family raised me. I am happy,



“Make sure that when you walk, you imagine you're massaging your mother's scalp. She gives us so much, you must not take her for granted.”

proud, and I know who I am because the teachings of my people position me as a constructive actor in the world while the school system teaches, falsely, that my people while beautiful, are dying, conquered, obsolete. I feel what seems like an unfair burden to learn the teachings of my elders when I see my culture represented only in superficial ways. When the world only understands the shallow surface of who we are, how do we effectively communicate the depth when all that is seen is novelty?

As I traveled into Halifax that winter day I was appreciative of the new pair of moccasins that my Mother had made for me. They say to the world, “My Mother loves me so much she wants me to feel a connection with my other Mother when I walk.” Each step I take in my moccasins, I have an obligation to present myself in a way that brings my mother honour and respect. My Sayé, Campbell Papequash always told me, “Make sure that when you walk, you imagine you're massaging your mother's scalp. She gives us so much, you must not take her for granted.” When I flew into Halifax that night, I didn't realize that I was taking some of my relationships for granted. It wouldn't be long before I learned that Campbell had left this world to begin another kind of journey.

For four consecutive nights in mid-January, I had dreams preparing me for the news. I did not realize what they meant then, but on the third night I dreamt of a pure white Owl standing in the darkness. Campbell was an Elder, one of those community members who have the duty to carry the oral traditions and ceremonies of our



This is What I Wish You Knew Project

people. He was also my adopted Clan Brother and childhood best friend. With him, I belonged when I didn't belong anywhere else. Part of his work before he passed was to make our traditions and ceremonies accessible to Indigenous people in Canadian prisons. In the Circles he ran, he would use an Owl feather.

In our culture, Owls are messengers. Although many people believe that Owls are bad omens, Campbell would elaborate on that teaching. He would say that this misunderstanding resulted from the process of colonization, whereby we had been trained over generations to only see the bad in our environment, like pollution and loss of our lands, or the suffering of our loved ones. He would say that the Owl also brings good messages. Campbell said that everyone in the Circle had a message to bring, and that by using an Owl feather we would hear the positive lessons in each other's stories. But we had to be listening.

I returned to Halifax this winter to take part in an art project called This Is What I Wish You Knew. Fifty Indigenous people living in Halifax, from many cultures, came together to create a mural that tells a story about our individual and collective experiences. We held talking circles, and from those circles I saw that my community, here and away, experiences a lot of pain. We are hurting, we are fearful, at times angry, yet still we are compassionate, welcoming, supportive, and some are literally dying to be heard.

Campbell was a Residential School Survivor. My Father is a Survivor of the 60s Scoop, that saw him placed in a church run institution for

Métis and First Nations kids in Saskatchewan. Both men left those places angry, hurt, and bereft of any sense of identity or self. But both found healing and strength in our ceremonies and traditions.

This winter I was reeling from the loss of one of the central pillars of not only my life, but also of my community. Future generations have lost the teachings he was unable to pass on. Teachings that had been passed from generation to generation of my people since our birth in this land. I now know that the Owl is still speaking to me through my recollection of her standing on the path that night. Those who currently hold our teachings will one day pass. They must not be taken for granted. We have a responsibility to the future.

I am the first generation of my family not to be forcibly removed from my parents. I would like to tell you about the teachings I've been exposed to, like my experience with the Owl, and how these teachings have made my life whole. I would like to share how I experience our world, but I'm not sure that you would hear me. I'm unsure whether you would hear much more than what you perceive as the novelty of a beautiful but dying culture.

I've decided to share with you the Owl's omen with the expectation that you will listen to her gift. I know that every person in the This Is What I Wish You Knew art project has a message to share. They've read the message of Kitchi Manitou in the world around them. They write themselves on the hearts of the people close to them. This is what I wish you knew. We are not dying. It's time to start listening.

Dylan Andrew Young Letendre is Métis from Saskatchewan. Among other things he is a Research Assistant for Dr. Amy Bombay. He is passionate about his culture and in his spare time you can find him elbows deep in compost for his growing garden. He would like to recognize the unique contributions of Jayme-Lynn Glode while writing this.

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Symbols of Resistance

by **ROBIN TRESS** /// Volunteer

Art and imagery have played a role in resistance movements throughout time and across issues. Think of the red square of the Quebec student movement, born from the idea that the province's proposal to raise tuition would put students "carrément dans la rouge" (squarely in the red). This tiny image or symbol carries a huge punch – wearing a red square immediately identifies you as part of the movement. It evokes union, a common purpose, and a clear message: free tuition or bust.

Creating and harnessing powerful imagery can turn the tide for a social movement, and the environmental justice movement is catching on. When it comes to the Energy East tar sands pipeline slated to end in Saint John, NB, people are fighting back against the project and using a collaborative art project to their advantage.

The Harmony Project is an art project by the Peace and Friendship Alliance of New Brunswick, which is an alliance of Mi'kmaq, Wolastoq, and non-Indigenous people with a mandate "to limit corporate control of natural resources; protect air, land, and water for all our relations; and take united action for a healthy planet."

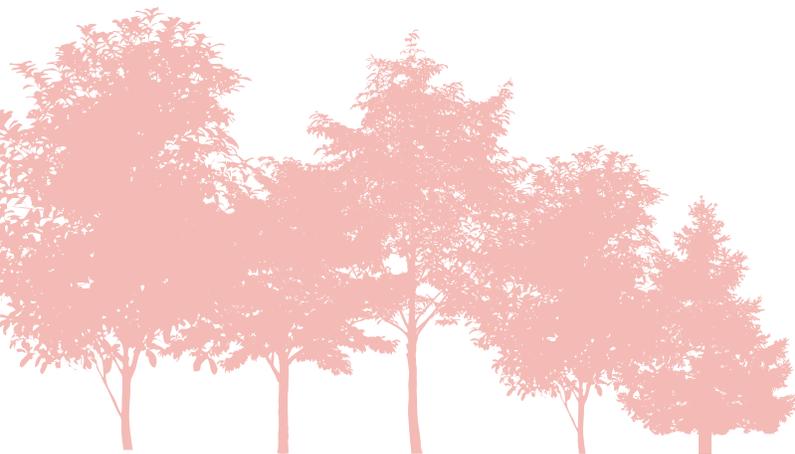
The Harmony Project marks out the route of the Energy East pipeline by posting the Wolastoq emblem on trees or poles on roads near the proposed pipeline route, particularly near water crossings. Energy East is slated to cross 370 waterways in New Brunswick, and almost 3000 waterways from Alberta to the Atlantic coast.

This emblem is rich in history, myth, and meaning. It comes from the Wolastoq peoples' creation story for the Wolastoq River (the Saint John River):



Ben Gotschall from Bold Nebraska, Mark D'arcy from Council of Canadians, and Alma Brooks from St. Mary's First Nation painted an emblem on a tree near Hampton, New Brunswick.
PHOTO: Council of Canadians

Agleb'em kept back all the water in the world; so that rivers stopped flowing, and lakes dried up and the people everywhere began dying of thirst. They sent a messenger to him to ask him to give the people water; but he refused and gave the messenger only a drink from the water in which he washed. Then the people began complaining. A great man Kelowaskap was sent to Agleb'em to beg him to release the water for the people. Agleb'em refused, saying that he needed it for himself to lie in. Then the Kelowaskap cut a tree, so it fell on top of the Agleb'em and killed him. This tree became the main river Wolastoq and the branches became the tributary branches of the river, while the leaves became the ponds and lakes.





Alma Brooks, Ben Gotschall, and Mark D'arcy stand in front of an emblem they painted on a birch tree near Chipman, NB. PHOTO: Council of Canadians



Ben Gotschall from Bold Nebraska paints an emblem on a birch tree. Bold Nebraska fought and stopped the Keystone XL pipeline. PHOTO: Council of Canadians

The decision to use this traditional Wolastoq emblem instead of any other imagery demonstrates the cooperation and unity between non-Indigenous and Indigenous people working together to protect the land, air, and water we all depend on, and is an important act of peace and friendship, in the spirit of the Peace and Friendship Treaties.

Marking out the pipeline route not only brings the pipeline, and all the associated risks, to life for people living in the area, but it also fights back against the misinformation (or complete lack of information) given by Energy East Ltd., or the National Energy Board. Mark Darcy, Council of Canadians' Stop Energy East NB campaigner, says, "Communities across this province have been kept in the dark about the exact route of Energy East and the risks and impacts of spills." Any maps that are available are indecipherable to anyone without an engineering background. Written materials about the pipeline are highly technical and often not translated into French, which is the first language for many communities in the Saint John River Valley through which the pipeline could be built.

"TransCanada, the National Energy Board, and Brian Gallant's government have failed to provide even basic information such as easy-to-read and understandable maps," says Darcy.

The project is still growing and more emblems are being posted. If you find yourself in the Saint John River valley in New Brunswick and you see an emblem, know that the place you are in could be threatened by millions of barrels of bitumen every day, and know that together we can fight and win.

Robin Tress is the Atlantic Regional Organizing Assistant for the Council of Canadians. Robin completed a B.Sc. in Environmental Science with a focus in marine ecology from Dalhousie University, and B. Journalism from King's College. She is proud to have worked locally, nationally, and internationally pushing governments and institutions to take action on climate change, and building the youth climate justice movement.

Poetry of the Land

by MARY ELLEN SULLIVAN /// Volunteer

PHOTO: Marla McLeod

I grew up on my family's farm outside Guelph, Ontario where I spent hours walking through the fields, the crops, and the woods. I wrote love poems about my farm. For a child who was painfully shy and quiet, my farm was a place of sanctuary, a place of nature-wonder. I had a fledgling sense of the land as something very special. My family and neighbours were the community that provided a sense of security, a context in which I felt accepted and valued.

I remember when Sylvia Mangalam, co-founder of the EAC's Food Action Committee, asked, "What are we going to do about the Canadian Wheat Board?!" during a meeting. This question, and Sylvia's passion, inspired me to become involved in a Food Action Committee letter-writing campaign in 2011. I discovered and joined the National Farmers Union and witnessed the patronizing dismissal of the opinions and wisdom of these farmers by the Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture of the time.

I decided to use my love of poetry to turn my sense of political powerlessness and exasperation into something positive. I started an annual issue of poetry called *Open Heart Farming* that collects and records the voices of Nova Scotia farmers and others who care about food. It's really quite simple – a green, legal-size sheet of paper with about twenty food and farming themed poems.

Poetry is powerful: distilling emotions, stories and images. It's like seed-bombing — you don't know what will happen when you release a poem. When I started *Open Heart Farming* I could barely speak, let alone read my poetry, in front of an audience. I remember the first time I read at an Open Heart Forgery launch. I'd spent a week trying to find a music stand because I knew my hands would be shaking like leaves in a strong wind, and my poor sheets of poetry would be shaking even more.

I quickly saw first-hand that there's something very special and intangible about gathering people together to read poetry. *Open Heart Farming* poets have read at farmers' markets and food-focused events. Each issue was launched at a Halifax public library, drawing large, enthusiastic audiences. I remember our first launch in 2012 when a distinguished-looking Ed Belzer read his own poem, then recited

Wendell Berry's famous "Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front." Ed told the audience he practised reciting it while he gave his team of work horses a break. How did the horses react, I wanted to know! Another poet told me she couldn't read her poem, but by intermission she'd changed her mind. Although her voice shook, the audience had such respect for her courage. And then this year there was ten-year old Adam Bateman, masterfully performing his poem on tippy-toes at the podium before his mom, Leslie Anne Bateman, read hers. Through this journey I've discovered farm and poetry elders like Sylvia Mangalam, Ed Belzer and Lois Brison Brown who so wondrously capture the sanctity of the land. There are also people like FAC Aaron Eisses, who'd "never written a poem in my life" and whose poem, I know, has resonated with people and provoked reflection.

It's the poets who keep me committed to this poetry project. I love hearing the stories of each poet and what their poem means to them. It's led to delightful email exchanges, and I've made evocative and inspiring friends. These people, through their poems and their caring, truly show me what it means to have an open heart.

Funny thing is, after all these years of inviting people to share their funny, poignant, risqué and wise poetry, I'm excited to speak in front of a crowd. I love telling others about *Open Heart Farming* and the poets. It's just recently that I've realized *Open Heart Farming* has become a metaphor for "my farm," a place where I've found a wonderful community. Whether it's through poetry or another art form, I think creators can't help but experience a sense of the sacredness of the land. Some will call themselves poets. Others will use their voices as artists, activists, advocates, and visionaries to express their love of our common home, the Earth. We all bring our gifts.

Mary Ellen Sullivan is an EAC Food Action Committee volunteer. Her poetry and prose has popped up in various locations including literary journals and the anthology *In the Company of Animals: Stories of Extraordinary Encounters*. She has a collection of poetry, *My Farm Whispers*, and writes the *Open Heart Farming* blog.

“ It is a chance to write non-competitive verse and to read other voices of poets who don't teach or write poetry for money and career. It is rather a blessing! ”

- Scott Jamieson



The Earth of My Ancestors

by Lois R. Brison Brown

Seeded in the earth of my ancestors
Nurtured in the soil of their fields
Waiting for the heat of their sun
Drinking in the waters of their rain
I grow upwards into their light.

- We've put together five annual issues of *Open Heart Farming*.
- *Open Heart Farming* has published ninety-three poems by fifty-six poets.
- Copies of *Open Heart Farming* issues have sprouted up across Canada and in the United States, Belgium, Germany, Mexico, and India.
- *Open Heart Farming* is a special issue of *Open Heart Forgery*. Find issues of *Open Heart Farming* and the *Open Heart Farming* blog at www.ohforgery.com. Please share with farm-loving and food-friendly people!

The Funky Chicken

by Adam Christopher Bateman, Age 10

When I walk in the woods
I don't see things I normally would.

Would I see a chicken? Would I see a bear?
I don't know, does anyone care?

But when I saw that chicken
It was as smooth as molasses
It had a 'stache and black sunglasses

When I got up close, as a matter of fact
I noticed him wearing my father's top hat

He had a leather jacket, from years gone by
And around his neck, a furry bow tie

But when I got one step closer, he started to dance
I was thinking "why would a chicken prance?"

Wait a second, those are my shoes!
I looked down
Would he take my shoes if he could?
Yes he would!

In a second he saw me
He was acting cool
I'll teach you a lesson you can't learn in school:
Run away from the funky chicken.



PHOTO: Jeff Fish

Art of the Environment

by **KIM THOMPSON** /// Volunteer

The Deanery Project is a learning centre focused on the environment and the arts. It is a beautiful oceanfront property located near four protected wilderness and park areas on the Eastern Shore. Art informs everything we do at the Deanery Project. It is part of the “culture of care” that guides our work.

We believe that art stimulates, challenges and soothes us, connecting us with both our natural and built environments. We fall in love with art. That sense of profound connectedness in turn provides us with guidance about taking the right actions to preserve and protect our world, and to build a more resilient future.

The work of the Deanery Project includes a variety of place-based learning activities: workshops, programs, events, research and more.
thedeaneryproject.com



PHOTO: Jeff Fish



PHOTO: The Deanery Project



PHOTO: The Deanery Project

Kim Thompson is the Executive Director of the Deanery Project. She is passionate about natural building, and a natural at building community.

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FOOD

Investing in Community & Harvesting More than Vegetables

In August we published two reports that assessed our work using a Social Return on Investment approach. We found that our Cape Breton programming generates twice the value for every dollar spent and the Halifax Food Policy Alliance generates over five times the value compared to the cost! Meanwhile, it's peak season for food programming. Working with the Island Food Network in Cape Breton, recent activities included a farm tour, cooking workshop series, and plans for an expanded Food UpSkilling event. In Halifax, summer workshops included food preservation, growing in Canada, bulk buying, and seed saving. In Cumberland County, there's a community garden in almost every community, with a new garden in Wentworth popping up this season. Additionally, we're supporting the Municipality of Cumberland in their buy-local campaign and a taskforce has been established to examine ways of increasing the number of sustainable farms in the county. In New Brunswick, the Seeds for Change committee has been sharing the stories (with taste testings!) of locally adapted heirloom seeds.

MARINE

From Fun Oyster Facts to International Policy

We presented at the 2016 Ocean Literacy Conference and the Sustainable Oceans Conference on educating consumers through visual media and encouraging Canadians to choose sustainable seafood to help save our oceans from overfishing and destructive fishing methods. We also had a booth at the "You Me and the Sea" event at the Halifax Central Library and children participated in ocean themed arts and crafts. We taught Oyster Fest-goers fun facts about sustainable oyster aquaculture while they slurped and shucked oysters from around the country. We attended the 8th International Fisheries Observer and Monitoring Conference in San Diego to discuss the importance of observers in collecting fisheries data as well as the future and innovation in technologies with an emphasis on Electronic Reporting and Video Monitoring. We also presented at the International Marine Conservation Congress in August in Newfoundland, on species at risk, closed areas and the need for Canada to become a leader at the UN for a new agreement to protect biodiversity on the high seas.

WILDERNESS

Bad Public Process Fails Forests

We condemned the recent killing of the most important commitments in the Natural Resources Strategy by the provincial Department of Natural Resources. On the very date when the department had committed to reach a long-promised 50% reduction in clearcutting, they announced they would instead be abandoning that commitment altogether. This bombshell was buried in the back of an otherwise long, self-congratulatory "progress update." In reality, the Natural Resources Strategy has been quietly destroyed by the bureaucracy for the pleasure of the big forestry industry players. To have walked away from these commitments is an affront to the thousands of Nova Scotians who participated in good faith in the 3-year public process to create the Strategy that contained commitments to reduce clearcutting, to regulate whole tree harvesting and stop taxpayer subsidies for forest herbicide spraying.

COASTAL & WATER

Education Partnerships

We've teamed up with the Nova Scotia Community College's Environmental Engineering program to help with Project Groundswell, our community-based groundwater monitoring program. Each year, students will contribute to running this project including processing groundwater data so that we can make it available online. We have also begun a new project working with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to educate coastal communities around the province about sea level rise. This initiative involves collaborating with a variety of partners and includes the development of an informative website with recent information on sea level rise for our region as well as adaptation tools. Stay tuned for pilot workshop locations.

TRANSPORTATION

Cycleone!

Fall is here and it's the best time to cycle, so be sure to get out and take part for your wellbeing and for the environment. Welcoming Wheels is rolling forward. This summer we gifted bikes, safety equipment and cycling education to another 15 new Canadians! Thank you to all of our extraordinary volunteers and partners. The Halifax Try-A-Ride mobile cycle, skate and scooter unit wrapped up another outstanding year leading adapted Making Tracks programs for almost 1,700 participants (primarily youth). Nova Scotian schools are now fortunate to have 20 more Making Tracks Cycling-trained teachers to provide programming for students. Thank you and we look forward to providing you with support to make your cycling programs successful. The EAC's Sustainable Transportation Action Team wants your help to grow sustainable transportation. Meet with us the first Monday of every month from 5:30pm to 7:00pm at the EAC.

ENERGY

Climate Superheroes

We're celebrating that Canada has ratified the Paris climate change agreement along with over 60 other countries and announced that there will be a price on carbon across Canada. The National Energy Board is undergoing a 'modernization' process, but is also under fire for fraternizing with fossil fuel companies, that has caused the entire Energy East Pipeline review panel to step down. We will continue to pressure our Federal government to adopt an ambitious climate plan and improve the National Energy Board while also pressuring our provincial government to create a carbon pricing framework that is equitable and effective in reducing emissions. In October our team will visit Ottawa for ClimaCon, a national convergence of climate superheroes to exchange information, ideas, and lessons. In November, we will be in Ireland to participate in a Smart Energy Communities Conference where we will be sharing best community energy practices and expertise from NS.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Fighting for Parks

We collaborated with EAC's Wilderness Team who led the fight to save Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes from a massive sprawl development. Thanks to over 1,400 citizen letters to Halifax Council the beautiful dream of this urban park survives to fight another day. We also supported our allies in the Purcell's Cove Backlands Coalition in calling for the creation of another important Regional Park. Both of these areas are important wilderness jewels in the heart of a growing city that must be protected as part of wider regional greenbelt that protects and preserves our most precious natural assets. Our Aiming for Net Zero speaker series continues this fall with more monthly talks on how buildings can generate as much energy as they consume. Learn more about upcoming speakers at: ecologyaction.ca/netzero

The Seasonal Gourmet

by **CHAITI SETH** /// Volunteer

Winter Vegetable Soup

As a gardener and eater, I always find it amazing how produce in each season tastes and feels so appropriate for the body. Cool, refreshing, crunchy produce like tomatoes, cucumbers and greens are light and keep you hydrated in the summer months. And as the cooler months roll in we can dig into denser, more filling and brightly coloured veggies like winter squash, carrots, beets and parsnips. Here is a warm, hearty and bright soup for cozy winter evenings. The garnish oil (recipe adapted from Ottolenghi's Plenty More) is wonderfully flavourful. One recipe makes enough for several batches of soup and the oil will store for several weeks in an airtight container on the shelf. I like to make and freeze several recipes worth of soup at one and pull them out for a quick and satisfying mid-week meal!



PHOTO: Chaiti Seth

INGREDIENTS (SERVES 6)

- 2 cups** butternut or butternut squash or carrots, peeled and diced
- 1 cup** dried red lentils
- 3 tbsp.** vegetable oil
- 1** medium onion, thinly sliced (1 cup)
- 2 tbsp.** thai red curry paste
- 10** dried kaffir lime leaves
- 1 ½ cups** coconut milk
- 1 ½ tbsp.** lemon juice
- 1 ½ tbsp.** gluten-free soy sauce

FOR GARNISH OIL (ENOUGH FOR 18 SERVINGS/ 3 SOUP RECIPES)

- ¾ cup** sunflower oil
- 2** shallots, coarsely chopped (½ cup)
- 2** cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 tsp.** fresh ginger, minced
- ½** red chile, coarsely chopped
- 1 pod** star anise
- 2 tsp.** curry powder
- 1 tsp** tomato paste

DIRECTIONS

First make the garnish oil. Heat the sunflower oil in a small saucepan. Add the remaining garnish oil ingredients and simmer gently for 30 minutes. Leave to cool and then strain through a cheesecloth. Discard all the solids and reserve the oil.

For the soup, heat 3 tbsp. of oil in a large pot and add the onion. Cook until the onion is soft. Stir in the thai red curry paste, kaffir lime leaves, diced winter vegetable, and red lentils and 4 cups water. Bring to a boil, turn the heat to low and simmer until lentils and vegetables are completely soft. Remove the kaffir lime leaves and then blend the soup until completely smooth. Finally, add coconut milk, lime juice, soy sauce and salt to taste and stir well.

To serve, ladle hot soup into bowls, garnish each portion with oil!

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.

ECO HOROSCOPES

by **EMMA BOARDMAN** /// EAC staff



ARIES (March 21–April 19)

Learn something new and challenging this winter, either to improve your career directly, or for your own interest. Look up what's offered for the winter term at universities and colleges, or, if you're short on cash, check out free lectures at libraries or the Halifax Trade School (tradeschool.coop/halifax). EAC's Net Zero Speaker series (ecologyaction.ca/netzero) is also free. If you're single, you might even meet a new special someone in one of your courses, what with lucky ol' Jupiter hanging around in your house of partnerships.



TAURUS (April 20–May 20)

You're remarkably soulful and introspective these days. Take a refreshing break from other humans and their overwhelming angst, and go for a walk in the woods or on a beach by yourself. Bring your sketchpad, camera or notebook to record your contemplations or remind yourself of the deep insight that a particular piece of frozen moss brought you. Both the creativity and the nature therapy will help you revitalize, and it may inspire other people to do the same.



GEMINI (May 21–June 21)

It's hard to understand when other people don't feel as passionately as you do about protecting the environment, eh? You're feeling extra activist-y and motivated to speak up to anyone who will listen this month. Do it up. But if you see eyes glaze over because it's the ninth time you've ranted to your patient barista about the same thing this week, it might be time to channel that energy into a different medium. (Letter to the editor? Blog post? Poem?)



CANCER (June 22–July 22)

You're working so hard these days, and getting a lot of important stuff done. That's fabulous, but it's also essential to take time to recharge. You do that best in your own home, and there's nothing wrong with that. Maybe look up a new recipe for homemade skin or hair treatments (with sustainably harvested ingredients), and treat yourself to your own personal spa day. Make extras to give away as holiday gifts if you wish.



LEO (July 23–August 22)

Find some children and play together! (If they're not your own, ask their parents first.) You're all about creative fun right now, and kids will love to join in. Try out the recipe in this magazine together! Make some bookmarks or tree ornaments out of old newspapers or calendars! Make some costumes out of old buttons and yogurt containers (or whatever else is around) then film a silly dance video!



VIRGO (August 23–September 22)

If you've been difficult to live with because of all the challenges in the sky earlier this fall, now is a great time to make it up to those you care about. Make a beautiful (locally sourced and cooked from scratch) brunch for your partner, sister, or best friends. Tell them just how important they are to you. Your communication is spot on this month so any message you send should be received well.



LIBRA (September 23–October 22)

This should be a lucky year for you, although some (likely necessary and long-coming) changes to your usual patterns may not feel so lucky at first. Ensure that it all works out for the best by taking care of your spirit. Expand your horizons through short day trips to find new adventures. You may love the gorgeous blend of environmental sustainability and the fine arts to be found at The Deanery in Ship Harbour (thedeaneryproject.com) – they offer workshops and tours that are sure to inspire.



SCORPIO (October 23–November 21)

It's a good time to examine your finances, and cut frivolous spending to focus on what you really need. That doesn't mean you have to skimp on holiday gifts though! Homemade treats made from simple ingredients, gift certificates for your services, a winter hike with friends – none of these things cost much coin, but they'll be some of the most memorable gifts your loved ones get this season.



SAGITTARIUS

(November 22–December 21)

The concept of "mansplaining" has made a lot of headlines this year. The internet defines it, "to explain something to someone, typically a man to a woman, in a manner regarded as condescending or patronizing." But you and I both know it's more likely to be Sagittarians of any gender doing what I prefer to call "Sadge-splaining." You love to teach, and your passion and optimism inspire others as long as you check that urge to Sadge-splain. You're especially into channeling that passion into humanitarian causes this month, which is great. Just remember that as you are spreading the joy by teaching others, you will benefit immensely if you take the time to also learn from them.



CAPRICORN

(December 22–January 19)

You're craving some major independence. Now's a great time to break outside of your normal patterns and try something you've never done before. Get crafty with upcycling (bottlecap necklaces? Earrings cut from old computer parts?), redecorate your home with salvaged wood and clay paint, go on a winter camping adventure. Anything new (to you) will help you feel energized through the winter.



AQUARIUS (January 20–February 18)

You've got a lot of pent up energy that you probably want to channel into exercise. A group will help you stay motivated. Recruit your friends to ski or skate with you once a week, walk or cycle to class every day with your friends, or start a lunchtime walk club at your work. The combination of social time and exercise will keep you very healthy, so feel free to celebrate together with the occasional fair trade hot chocolate or local microbrew beer!



PISCES (February 19–March 20)

You know that feeling when you intend just have one small glass wine with dinner, then an hour later the whole bottle has somehow disappeared, along with the entire batch of cookies you made this morning? Yeah. Watch out for that. Savour your experiences this winter – food, drink, nature, books, art. Journal about them or even post a photo on Instagram to document your experience and help yourself focus on being in the moment.

Emma Boardman is EAC's Digital Communications Manager and a professional astrologer based in Halifax. She writes eco-horoscopes to have a bit of fun, but as an astrologer, would rather help you explore your own unique birth chart and the insight it can offer. You can follow Emma on Twitter @[hiddenfireastro](https://twitter.com/hiddenfireastro)

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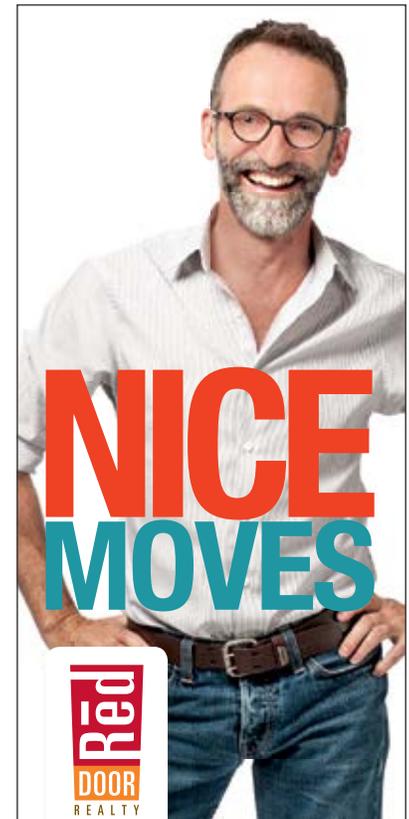
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Recent Successes

- **We launched our third cost-share local food box program.** In addition to the ones in Cumberland County and southeast New Brunswick, we are now piloting a program in Cape Breton. In total, the boxes supply 52 families with affordably priced and locally sourced vegetables from over 30 farms.
- **Two new areas of Canadian waters were closed to bottom fishing to protect deep sea corals.** This adds almost 5,000 square kilometres to existing closures and brings Canada closer to reaching the commitment of 10 percent protection of marine and coastal areas by 2020. EAC has been working on deep sea coral protection since 1996.
- **We also celebrated a new closure** (239 square kilometres) **designated by the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO)**, a fisheries organization with 14 members including Canada that is responsible for fisheries management and conservation in the Northwest Atlantic. This closure will help protect vulnerable deep-sea soft corals called sea pens.
- **We marked a significant positive change in Canada fisheries policy** when Canada supported a shark fins attached policy at the recent Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization annual meeting and committed to this policy for other national and international fisheries management bodies.
- **We led the fight to save Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes Park** from a massive sprawl development and in the process mobilized over 1,400 citizen letters to Halifax Council!

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