

# Ecology & Action

SPRING 2016



## IN THIS ISSUE



Straight up  
Sewage



Food desert  
in bloom



Sorting the  
Garbage

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## CONTRIBUTORS

Jonathan Beadle, Sadie Beaton, Emma Boardman, Erin Burbidge, Ian Johnston, Julia Kemp, Kelsey Power, Samantha Sternberg, Rose Sneyd, Robin Tress, EAC staff

## CONTENT EDITORS

Emma Boardman, Erin Burbidge, Maggy Burns, Cormekia Clayton, Ian Johnston, Robin Tress

## COPY EDITORS

Ian Johnston, Tiffany MacDonald, Satya Ramen

## ADVERTISING

Cormekia Clayton

## ILLUSTRATIONS /ARTWORK

Marven Nelligan, Colleen MacIsaac, Heather Grant

## PHOTOGRAPHERS

Kurt Samson, Adam Berry, Andrea Conrad, Heidi Verheul, Candace Baldwin, Julia Kemp, and Hope Blooms Staff

## DESIGN & PRODUCTION

Dean Gallant, Pinwheel Communication Design

## DISTRIBUTION

EAC staff, members and volunteers

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## COVER ARTWORK

**Marven Nelligan** is a full time web developer and graphic designer based in Halifax. He started out at a young age drawing portraits, painting murals, and airbrushing t-shirts. Marven grew up in Uniacke Square where he currently resides and has a strong connection to his community. While growing up, Marven spent a lot of his time in North Preston where his family comes from. These experiences are what influence most of Marven's art and this cover piece is directly inspired by his personal encounters with environmental racism. See more of Marven's work at [marvelousdesign.ca](http://marvelousdesign.ca)

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**Ecology Action Centre**

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## Ecology Action Centre

2705 Fern Lane

Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 4L3

902.429.2202

[www.ecologyaction.ca](http://www.ecologyaction.ca)

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# Letters

WE LOVE HEARING FROM YOU! EMAIL YOUR THOUGHTS TO [MAGAZINE@ECOLOGYACTION.CA](mailto:MAGAZINE@ECOLOGYACTION.CA)

## From the Centre

“Lean in & step back. Take the time to invest in relationships. It’s OK to be uncomfortable.”

*-group “tweet” at EAC’s annual retreat, which focused on environmental justice*

At EAC’s annual retreat in January, our invited speaker, environmental racism activist Lynn Jones, began her talk by acknowledging the value of admitting that we felt somewhat uncomfortable entering talks about environmental justice and environmental racism. “That takes courage [to admit],” she said. She mentioned a forum she had attended a few weeks prior, where the concept of “white fragility” had come up. “When you’re talking about justice, racism, and these kinds of issues, the goal has always been that those who have white privilege be comfortable. Otherwise they don’t want to hear what you have to say, and they’re not interested in moving forward.”

Admitting discomfort is only a small step, of course, and certainly not enough on its own. But, when we push ourselves to enter “uncomfortable” conversations, despite those feelings of discomfort, it is often a first step towards real change. Dialogue that allows those of us with white privilege to feel uncomfortable can also give voices from traditionally racialized communities an opportunity to speak openly and express full truths without fear of upsetting “white fragility.”

Environmental justice and environmental racism are heavy topics. Not to mention the baggage of colonial history that is tied up with both. It can be difficult for many of us to face the realities of our own privilege, and to learn that things we may have taken for granted – like access to clean air and water – are given to some communities at the expense of others. The historic and current injustices that we are a part of are so overwhelming, they may make us feel inadequate as individuals to create change.

In the early 2000s, EAC was taken to task for not doing enough to address ongoing environmental racism in the African Nova Scotian community of Lincolntonville. The criticism, of course, made us “uncomfortable,” but has spurred us to take steps to improve. Environmental justice is now one of our “cross-cutting themes” which span all of our action areas. How well are we incorporating it into our work? Well, as Sadie Beaton (who works for the Community Conservation Research Network researching EAC’s environmental justice work) pointed out at our retreat, sometimes it’s more about raising questions than finding definitive answers. She starts with questions like “how deep do we need to go to make a real shift?” and “who do we need to include on the journey?”

This issue of Ecology & Action explores a variety of topics related to environmental justice. In “The Right Direction,” Erin Burbidge discusses the David Suzuki Foundation’s Blue Dot campaign to enshrine the right to a healthy environment in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and how this campaign addresses systemic inequality and environmental racism. Sadie Beaton writes about the history of environmental racism in Lincolntonville, alongside her own experience of growing up with white privilege in the same county, in “Sorting the Garbage.” Jonathan Beadle describes how the Mi’kmaq community of Pictou Landing First Nation has been treated by government and industry since the toxic Northern Pulp spill into Boat Harbour, in “A legacy of Broken Promises.” Ian Johnston explores the connections between climate change, conflict and population displacement in “Environmental Refugees.”

If some articles in this magazine make you uncomfortable, remember, that’s okay. We hope it’s the beginning of a conversation that will be a step towards change.

*Emma Boardman  
on behalf of Ecology & Action Editors*

**ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM** is “the disproportionate location of polluting industries and other environmental harms near communities of colour and the working poor, relative to white communities. In Nova Scotia, Mi’kmaq and African Nova Scotian communities are more likely to experience disproportionate environmental health risks. It is also characterized by the lack of organization and political power that these communities have for advocating against the siting of industrial polluters and other environmental harms, the uneven negative impacts of environmental procedures, the uneven negative impacts of environmental policies, and the disproportionate access to environmental services such as garbage removal.” (*The Environmental Noxiousness, Racial Inequities & Community Health Project (ENRICH)*)

**ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE** is “the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies... It will be achieved when everyone enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work.” (*US Environmental Protection Agency*)

## To the Centre

Dear Editors,

I am more than a bit annoyed with the EAC trumpeting their salvage from the Dal Fitness Centre site (“Salvage to the Rescue,” Fall 2015). Dal has used the EAC to whitewash the destruction at the site. In fact, the demolition involved three former family homes and the entire Eliza Ritchey residence. While I am pleased the EAC is making use of the doors and other items, what was salvaged is a tiny fraction of the environmental damage and energy loss. Facilities Management have done such a good job of this PR caper that even the sustainability program at Dal is crowing about this. If the EAC was involved, how can Dal be wrong?

*Beverly Miller*

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Ecology Action Centre



**Michael Nuschke**, CFP, RFP, CIM  
Senior Financial Planning Advisor  
[mnuschke@assante.com](mailto:mnuschke@assante.com)

**Richard Nickerson**, CFP, CDFA  
Financial Planning Advisor  
[rnickerson@assante.com](mailto:rnickerson@assante.com)

**AssanteHydrostone.com**  
phone: 902-423-1200  
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# Straight Up Sewage

by ROSE SNEYD // EAC Editorial Committee

It was a dinner conversation that sparked Stella Bowles's interest in straight pipes, sewage, and the nearby LaHave River. While straight pipes that directly discharge human sewage into a body of water are illegal, there may still be hundreds in Bridgewater, according to the Bluenose Coastal Action Foundation. For Stella, a 12 year old, this was anathema; as she put it in a school essay, "Can you believe that people actually flush toilets directly into the LaHave River, and this is allowed to happen?"

Spurred to investigate the problem, Stella began testing the river water for fecal bacteria, and her results were similarly unbelievable. On January 3, 2016, Stella tested the levels of enterococci, the recommended indicator organism for fecal bacteria in marine water, at four different sites on the LaHave. At each site, the enterococci levels well exceeded the maximum of 70 enterococci per 100ml stipulated in Health Canada's "Guidelines for Canadian Recreational Water Quality" for primary contact. Health Canada defines primary contact as activities where "the whole body or the face and trunk are frequently immersed or the face is frequently wetted by spray." In other words, Stella discovered that "nowhere that I tested was it at all safe to swim."

In fact, the levels she discovered (see insert) even exceeded those prescribed by Health Canada for secondary contact. Secondary contact involves activities "in which only the limbs are regularly wetted and in which greater contact (including swallowing water) is unusual."

Locals were, in Stella's words, shocked. "It's amazing how many people didn't have a clue," she added. But wastewater engineering expert Dr. Rob Jamieson is not at all surprised.

In Nova Scotia, we treat wastewater in a central municipality or community facility, in an on-site system (often called a septic tank), or not at all. And figures published on the Halifax Regional Municipality website state that 50% of the population in the province relies on central systems, 45% on on-site systems, and 5% on raw discharge.

According to Dr. Jamieson, "Nova Scotia has one of the highest percentages of the population on on-site wastewater systems." And the problem with this? While the design and installation of new systems is well regulated, on-site systems may not be maintained properly, and there are no mandatory stipulations regarding their replacement. "It's quite likely that many people aren't aware of what it takes to keep the systems operational." Also, while the average lifespan of an on-site system is around 25 years, "there are certainly systems out there that are much older than 25 years that have not been replaced. And we really don't know how well those systems are functioning."

The issues Stella is uncovering in LaHave could well be a problem elsewhere, according to Dr. Jamieson. "I would think that there are other locations around Nova Scotia where you have similar types of



Stella Bowles Collecting samples from the LaHave.  
PHOTO: Andrea Conrad

## STELLA'S RESULTS: JANUARY 3, 2016

**Yacht Club: 206** enterococci/100ml  
**Upper LaHave: 371** enterococci/100ml  
**Dayspring: 330** enterococci/100ml  
**Shipyards Landing Bridgewater: 460** enterococci/100ml

issues in terms of older homes and poorly functioning or absent on-site wastewater systems where you'd see similar levels of fecal bacteria," he said. This situation poses a serious health risk for people who, like those in Stella's community, are unaware of the dangers posed by contaminated water and who continue to use the water for leisure.

According to Health Canada, testing bodies of water for fecal indicators like enterococci is the best way to demonstrate the presence of bacteria that cause infection in the intestines. And research has shown that when enterococci levels exceed 35 enterococci per 100ml, then, as Dr. Jamieson put it, "there is an increased risk of contracting a gastrointestinal illness if you are swimming or using that river for recreational purposes."

Dr. Jamieson stated that "Nova Scotia is taking good steps to make sure that all of our municipalities are in line with the Canadian standards [regarding centralized municipal wastewater systems]." However, when contacted, Nova Scotia Environment indicated that they were not responsible for the implementation of new standards introduced in the Wastewater Systems Effluent Regulations 2012, although they did acknowledge being "very concerned" about the issue of straight pipes.

As is Stella. "I want straight pipes to be eliminated. I want to be able to swim in the river, I want my brother to be able to swim in the river, and my family, and other families, but they can't because they can get sick." In the meantime, Stella will continue her research beyond her school science fair, and she is considering extending her testing to other areas. When her concerned mother asked Stella whether she was finding the project a little overwhelming, Stella characteristically responded, "What's so overwhelming about it? It's just pool!"

**Rose Sneyd** is a PhD candidate in English literature who studies 19th century English and Italian poetry. She combines her other passions for sustainable living and journalism in writing for *Ecology & Action*.

# The Right Direction

by ERIN BURBIDGE /// EAC Editorial Committee

## Toxic Taps

Once best known as a hub of blue-collar America's auto industry, the city of Flint, Michigan, has recently garnered international attention for its toxic tap water. In April 2014, Flint switched its water supply from Lake Huron (via Detroit) to the Flint River. The water from the river corroded Flint's aging pipes, causing lead to leach into the water and creating a serious public health threat.

The causes for a crisis of this scale will always be numerous and complex. However, given the continuing challenge of race relations in the US, the racial makeup of Flint is one factor that has dominated the discussion. Indeed, with a population that is over 50% African American, Flint is among the top ten US cities with large African American populations. People are asking tough questions about whether the city of Flint would have made the same decisions that precipitated the crisis or would have had the same delayed response if Flint had a different racial composition.

If there is a silver lining to what has happened in Flint, it may be that it gave centre stage, even briefly, to a dialogue about environmental racism, a phenomenon that too often goes unrecognized and unchallenged.

## Silent Too Long

Environmental racism is a problem that needs much more attention—and action—north of the border as well. As of December 2015, there were 131 Drinking Water Advisories in effect in 87 First Nations communities in Canada, excluding British Columbia (which maintains separate records). Seven of these First Nations communities are in Atlantic Canada. In two of these communities, the advisories have been in effect for over ten years.

Stories of the state of First Nations' drinking water occasionally draw national attention, as happened in 2011 and 2012 with the widespread coverage of the deplorable conditions the Attawapiskat First Nation faced in northern Ontario. But for the most part, this issue remains off the national radar.

And it's not just drinking water. There are many examples of certain populations bearing a disproportionate share of resource or environmental challenges. Take, for example, the severe food security challenges facing Canada's largely Inuit and Metis northern populations, or pollution hotspots in and around First Nations or historically black communities, including Nova Scotia's own Boat Harbour and Lincolnville.

## The Right to a Healthy Environment

As the other articles in this issue will attest, the intersection of environmental challenges and social and cultural equity is extraordinarily complex, and there is no one solution. Instead, there must be a transformational shift to how we recognize and respond to the consequences of systematic inequality.

One important part of that shift would be the recognition of a right to a healthy environment. The movement to enshrine this right, which has already been recognized in some form in 110 countries, is being spearheaded in Canada by the David Suzuki Foundation's Blue Dot Campaign and supported locally by organizations like the EAC.

What is the right to a healthy environment? At its most basic, it is the right for every person to have access to clean air and water, fertile soil, and nourishing food. More inclusive formulations of the right include things like access to green spaces within the community and affordable public transit and active transportation options.

The goal of the Blue Dot campaign is to enshrine the right to a healthy environment in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which would make it part of Canada's Constitution and therefore the supreme law of the land. All other laws at every level would have to honour that right.

How could embodying the right to a healthy environment in the Charter form part of the response needed to environmental racism? There are three principle ways that supporters of the right see this happening. First, guaranteeing a right to a healthy environment would set a new standard for environmental laws in Canada, resulting in a stronger body of laws to protect and preserve our air, water, food supplies, and other vital resources. In a similar vein, entrenching the right to a healthy environment as part of the Constitution would trigger the need to step up enforcement of existing environmental laws to ensure the protection of the right.

Finally, while previous governments have been able to repeal or amend key environmental laws in order to weaken or remove their protections, the Constitution is, by design, extremely hard to change. Therefore, having the Charter outline the right to a healthy environment would act as a shield against attempts by current or future governments to diminish environmental protections.





## EXCERPTS FROM THE HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY'S MUNICIPAL DECLARATION ON THE RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Whereas the Halifax Regional Municipality understands that people are part of the environment, and that a healthy environment is inextricably linked to the well-being of our community;

The Halifax Regional Municipality finds and declares that:

1. All people have the right to live in a healthy environment, including:

- The right to breathe clean air
- The right to drink clean water
- The right to consume safe food
- The right to access nature
- The right to know about pollutants and contaminants released into the environment
- The right to participate in decision-making that will affect the environment

2. The Halifax Regional Municipality has the responsibility, within its jurisdiction, to respect, protect, fulfill and promote these rights.

[...]

5. When creating or updating bylaws, policies and programs or initiatives, the Halifax Regional Municipality "shall consider residents' right to a healthy environment, including priority actions to:

- a) Ensure equitable distribution of environmental benefits and burdens within the municipality, preventing the development of pollution "hot spots";
- b) Ensure infrastructure and development projects protect the environment, including air quality;
- c) Address climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and implementing adaptation measures;
- d) Responsibly increase density;
- e) Prioritize walking, cycling and public transit as preferred modes of transportation;
- f) Ensure adequate infrastructure for the provision of safe and accessible drinking water;
- g) Promote the availability of safe foods;
- h) Reduce solid waste and promote recycling and composting;
- i) Establish and maintain accessible green spaces in all residential neighbourhoods.

[halifax.ca/council/agendasc/documents/151020ca1121.pdf](http://halifax.ca/council/agendasc/documents/151020ca1121.pdf)

West coast born but east coast raised, **Erin** is a proud Blue noser who gets inspired by the stories of those working to protect our vital communities and beautiful natural heritage.

Unfortunately, this last point concerning the difficulty of changing the Constitution highlights one of the biggest challenges facing the Blue Dot movement: garnering the support needed to amend the Charter. But that's not a challenge that daunts campaigners like Katie Perfitt, Blue Dot's Municipal and Provincial Organizer in Nova Scotia. Like other campaigners throughout Canada, Katie is working at the grassroots level to build support for the right within municipal governments, with the goal of building a critical mass of support at the provincial and, ultimately, the federal level.

So far, Halifax, Antigonish, and Yarmouth have passed declarations supporting the right to a healthy environment, joining over 100 other municipal governments across Canada. While provincial government has not adopted an environmental bill of rights, the Manitoba government has taken steps in this direction, giving hope to campaigners like Katie that Nova Scotia may take inspiration. "Manitoba is the first province to introduce a substantive environmental bill of rights," she said, noting that the David Suzuki Foundation and Ecojustice are working to help the Manitoba government develop draft language for the bill.

The Blue Dot campaigners have set a lofty goal, but transformation never comes easily. And though the monumental achievement of enshrining a new right in the Charter won't address environmental racism by itself, it's still a huge step in the right direction. "A healthy environment is a central piece of the Canadian identity," Katie explained, "and there's a mismatch when our highest laws don't speak to that identity."

# Environmental Refugees

by IAN JOHNSTON // EAC Editorial Committee



**In 2009**, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees predicted that climate change will soon be the most common cause of international displacement.

**Even in 2008**, 36 million people were displaced as a result of environmental factors.

**In 2014**, there were more than 60 million refugees worldwide. There have not been this many refugees since the First World War.

ILLUSTRATION: Colleen MacIsaac

Unsurprisingly, armed conflicts, particularly in the Middle East and South America, are largely to blame for the refugee crisis. Nearly half of Syria's population has been displaced, with over six million outside their country. However, environmental change is a factor in many of these conflicts. Syria suffered a severe drought beginning in 2006. While the Fertile Crescent region experiences periodic droughts, researcher Colin P. Kelley blamed the severity of this drought on a larger trend of climate change. The region has been becoming more arid over the past century as a result of rising temperatures and shifting winds. Local mismanagement of agriculture and water did not help the situation for poor and rural Syrians. In 2005, a new law required a license to drill a well. Widespread corruption meant impoverished farmers could wait months before receiving a license. The water table continued to drop, requiring deeper and deeper wells. The cost of digging, licenses, fees, and bribes drove many farmers from their land. In 2011, after four years of drought, civil war broke out in Syria. Mustafa Abdul Hamid, a Syrian farmer turned refugee, said to *Scientific American*, "The war and the drought, they are the same thing."

The connection between environmental factors and conflict is only recently being considered. It's a contentious and complex topic, but one that is gaining more recognition. In 2014, US Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel explained that climate change was already having an impact on global conflict. There is no doubt that when resources are scarce, people may end up fighting over them. In Syria, the drought brought poverty. Without a means to survive, over a million rural Syrians moved to cities seeking relief. Many ended up in illegal settlements squatting where they could. With unemployment, overcrowding, crime, and an oppressive regime, Syria became a powder keg.

When everything is dry, you only need a spark.

Kiribati, meanwhile, is drowning. It is a pacific island nation of about one hundred thousand people living on a group of atolls and reef islands. Climate change has brought flooding, storm surges, and water contamination. The highest point in Kiribati is only 81 metres above sea level. Most of their land is less than two metres above sea level. Salt water inundation threatens the limited crops they can grow. The government of Kiribati purchased land in Fiji in case their farmland becomes contaminated by salt water. That land might also be needed for emergency evacuation. Kiribati is one of the poorest and least developed nations on Earth, and it relies on international aid. What natural resources it had were harvested under colonization. Banaba Island was mined for its phosphate, leaving the interior completely without soil. Today, only a few hundred people live there. Kiribati's islands have limited fresh water that is threatened by droughts, salt water, and sewage contamination.

In September 2015, New Zealand deported Ioane Teitiota, who sought asylum due to climate change, back to Kiribati. New Zealand's supreme court rejected his appeal as he would not face persecution if returned to his home country. Had his case been accepted, he would have become the world's first climate change refugee.

“The war and the drought, they are the same thing.”

- Mustafa Abdul Hamid  
Syrian farmer

There is a legal gap recognized by the UN and the International Bar Association. The Refugee Convention of 1951 defines a refugee as someone who "has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion" should they return to their home country. Currently, there is no protection for internationally displaced people due to climate change. Even if Kiribati's islands sank beneath the waves, their inhabitants could not apply for refugee status.

Ioane Teitiota is taking his case to the UN, but at this time, he is back in Kiribati, jobless, with his son afflicted with boils from contaminated groundwater. According to the CIA World Factbook, the unemployment rate in Kiribati was 6% in 2005, and was estimated to be over 30% in 2010. King tides that flood villages used to come every three or four years, and now they come monthly. Villages flood, and sewage pours into homes.

The Paris Agreement, a global climate deal signed late last year, has no provisions for environmental refugees. Kiribati, like many poor nations disproportionately affected by climate change, will receive aid. The question of what to do with people when they have no land on which to stand remains unanswered.

## FURTHER READING

- Colin P. Kelley. "Climate change in the Fertile Crescent and implications of the recent Syrian drought." [pnas.org/content/112/11/3241.full.pdf](https://www.pnas.org/content/112/11/3241.full.pdf)
- John Wendle. "The Ominous Story of Syria's Climate Refugees" [scientificamerican.com/article/ominous-story-of-syria-climate-refugees/](http://scientificamerican.com/article/ominous-story-of-syria-climate-refugees/)
- UN News Centre. "Should international refugee law accommodate climate change?" [un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=48201#.Vq50w\\_krJdh](http://un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=48201#.Vq50w_krJdh)

**Ian Johnston's** eclectic background has helped him write 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.

# Welcoming Wheels

by **ADAM BERRY** /// EAC Staff

Due to the ongoing crisis in Syria, Halifax has opened its doors and welcomed refugees from this conflict region with our traditional Nova Scotian hospitality. Our project aims to help these migrants with mobility – by providing them with bicycles.

The Bikes for Refugees program is made possible through a partnership with Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia, Ecology Action Centre, Cyclesmith Bike Shop, Halifax Cycling Coalition, Bike Again, Mother's Pizza, Killam Properties, Bandha Bar, and Halifax Parks and Recreation.



## **Brin and Dan, volunteer bike mechanics, repair a bike at Citadel Community Centre**

The Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) and the EAC have been working together to host free Making Tracks Safe Cycling workshops for new Canadians each season. Sessions teach participants about road safety skills, bike maintenance, and the rules of the road through practice and coaching from certified trainers – inspiring immigrant health and independence. Participants have often been given a donated bicycle along with this training.



## **A few of the bountiful bikes donated by Haligonians November 7<sup>th</sup>**

On November 7, 2015, a Bikes for Refugees bike donation day was held at Cyclesmith Bike Shop. The donation day gained a great deal of media attention, and our original goal of 50 bikes was smashed before we had finished setting up the event signage. All told, 150 bikes were collected in three hours, with Cyclesmith accepting another twenty-five in the days following the event. Needless to say, we were elated and overwhelmed.

This ongoing project continues to grow and evolve thanks to the generosity and passion of partners and volunteers.

We are not currently accepting bikes, but donations to aid in the purchasing of parts, helmets, and locks for participants can be made to ISANS via [isans.ca/about/making-a-donation/](http://isans.ca/about/making-a-donation/).

Information about Making Tracks sessions will be available at [ecologyaction.ca/news/making-tracks](http://ecologyaction.ca/news/making-tracks).





### Andrew Feenstra, Cyclesmith owner, stands with children's bikes his staff repaired

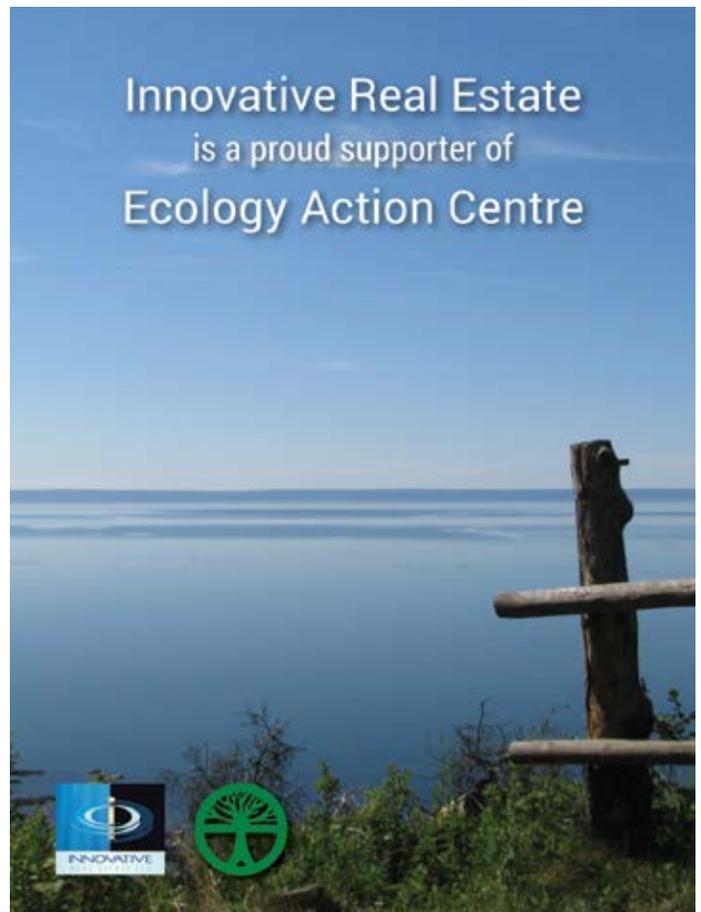
Our original storage location was filled to the rafters mid morning, but Andrew Feenstra at Cyclesmith saved the day – offering to store and repair all of the bikes with wheel sizes under 20 inches for free. Andrew and his team have repaired 75 bikes for young immigrants to date. Strong support from community bike shops makes our work more effective each cycling season. All bikes will be inventoried to help match bikes with recipients.



### Welcoming Wheels volunteers posing proudly with completed bikes

The donated adult bikes sat in storage for about a month before a new partnership with Citadel Community Centre found the perfect space to carry out the second phase of the project: Bike Repair. Volunteer bicycle repair sessions have been taking place each Friday evening, getting these bikes in tip-top shape. These sessions have been an opportunity for ISANS volunteers and clients to practice bike maintenance under the guidance of expert mechanics from Bike Again and the broader community. This mass repair is projected to be finished in early spring.

**Adam Berry** is a recreation professional with a passion for anything on wheels. He works as a project officer with the Making Tracks program at the EAC.



Some of the Try-A-Ride bikes.  
Adult sized bikes not pictured.  
PHOTO: Adam Berry



# As Easy as Riding a Borrowed Bike

by **IAN JOHNSTON** /// EAC Editorial Committee

Last summer saw the birth of the Try-A-Ride program offered through Halifax Parks and Recreation. Spoiler alert; it will definitely be back this year. It's an accessible free service that brings active transportation skills and equipment to the people. This means the curious could come out and learn the basic skills necessary to safely use a bicycle, skateboard, scooter, or in-line skates without having to bring their own gear.

Gabrielle Gallagher is an Active Living Coordinator for Halifax Parks and Recreation. She developed the program with accessibility in mind. She explained that the cost of a bicycle is prohibitive for someone who is unsure if they want to get into cycling. The Try-A-Ride program offered the opportunity to not only try riding a bicycle but also learn safe riding skills and develop confidence. Throughout the summer, they ran 36 sessions (including community and group events) with over 1,100 participants. By comparison, similar

programming in 2014 only reached around 200. At Try-A-Ride events, participants received a passport they could hang from a bike and check off the skills they acquired. They could visit again later or at another event to pick up additional skills and fill their passport.

Much of the equipment was already available to Halifax Parks and Recreation as part of the mobile bike unit or mobile skate park. What was needed was a teaching plan suitable for beginners where

people could choose their level of involvement. The answer was the Making Tracks program developed by the EAC. Adam Berry, Making Tracks Project Officer, explained that the program was developed in 2008 and was recently updated. It's a program not just in use with Try-A-Ride, he said. He reported the Making Tracks program is on track to achieve their goal of reaching 3,000 people in 2015. He said many students reported that after the training, they were riding more frequently thanks to increased confidence and better safety skills.

The program was a team effort, Gallagher stressed. It was created in partnership with the Halifax Regional Municipality. She said Parks and Recreation have always had a great working relationship with HRM Transportation. The program also owes a lot to the EAC's contribution of the Making Tracks program. The program begins again in July 2016.

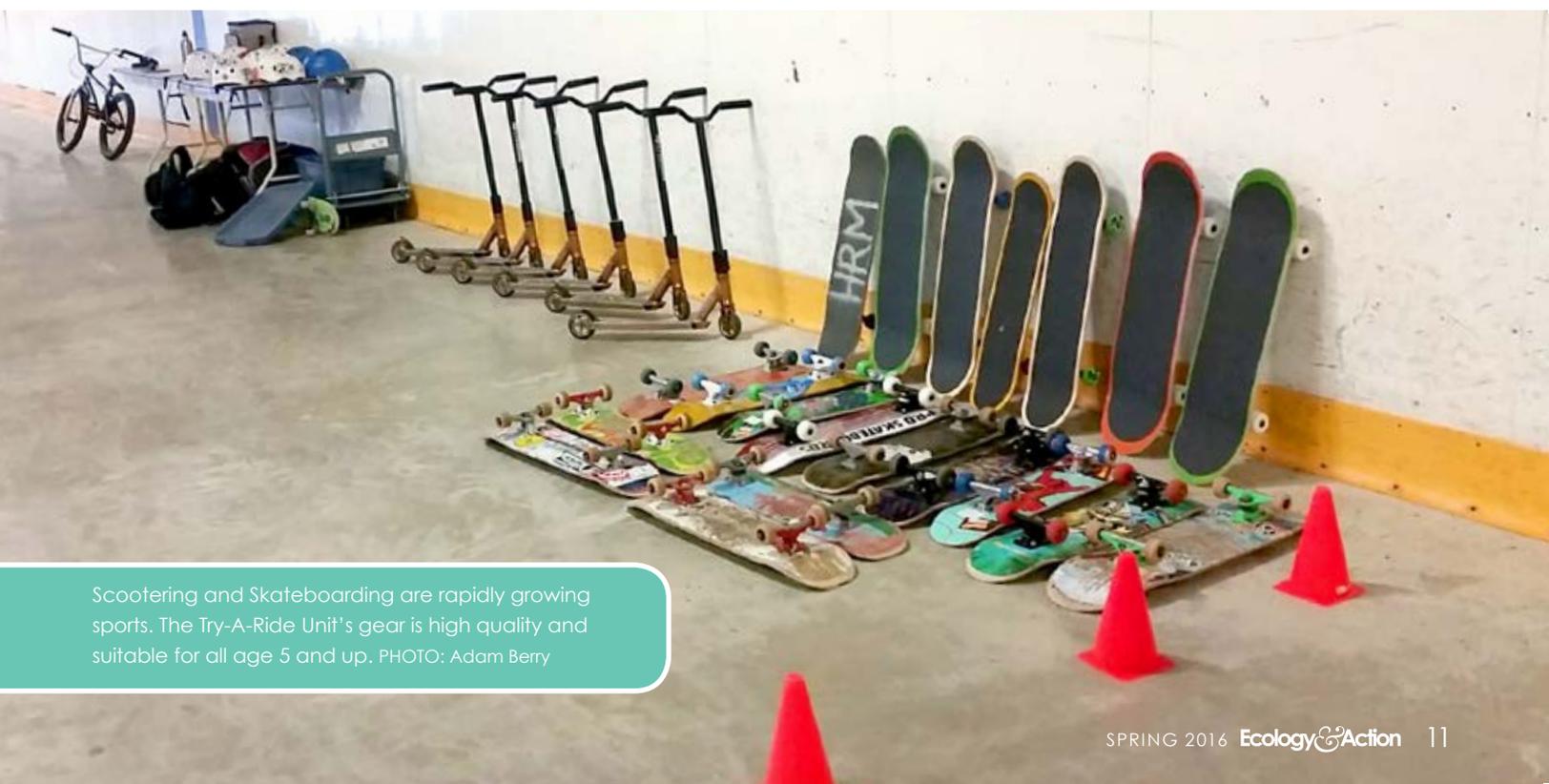
## TAKE ACTION

- Contact [MT@ecologyaction.ca](mailto:MT@ecologyaction.ca) for information on training for your organization.
- Ride a bike on the Oval. The Oval isn't just for skating. When it's not iced, bikes are available, including adult training bikes and adapted bikes for individuals with physical impairments.
- Visit [halifax.ca/rec/try-a-ride.php](http://halifax.ca/rec/try-a-ride.php) for more information about Try-A-Ride, including upcoming events. The program begins again in July, 2016.

“ I would like to express my extreme thanks to the Musquodoboit Harbour rec office. This weekend, they had multiple staff helping out at the summer fair. My kids, ages four and six, both said that the best part of our day at the fair was the skateboarding and scooter lessons. The staff were safe [and] attentive to my kids and took the initiative, teaching them safety and how to use the equipment properly. A huge thank you and congratulations to Doug Murphy and his staff for putting on a fantastic and extremely kid friendly day! ”

- Marc

**Ian Johnston's** eclectic background has helped him write on diverse topics including literature, real estate, executive leadership, and mental health. He received an 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.



Scotering and Skateboarding are rapidly growing sports. The Try-A-Ride Unit's gear is high quality and suitable for all age 5 and up. PHOTO: Adam Berry



Jackson Beadle, Jonathan's son, stands next to effluent outflows at Boat Harbour, leaving a thick froth on the water's surface.

PHOTO: Jonathan Beadle

# A Legacy of Broken Promises

by **JONATHAN BEADLE** /// Volunteer

It's been almost two years since a pipe carrying effluent from the Northern Pulp Mill burst, causing a major leak that spewed a coffee-like fluid into Pictou Harbour. We of the Pictou Landing First Nation (PLFN) were not notified of this leak, as is government protocol—we found out about it as a rotten egg stench filled our noses and the sight of black liquid flowing into our harbour struck our eyes.

The spill from the rupture of the pipe dumped millions of litres of untreated effluent into Pictou Harbour. The leak spilled onto the land, and the tailings surrounded an ancient sacred burial site at Indian Cross Point. The safety and sanctity of this burial site has been a concern throughout the entire Boat Harbour tailings fiasco.

Nothing has really been done to heal the wounds caused by this spill. Chief and Council of PLFN are still creating an impact statement about how the leak affected community members personally, but the function of that statement is unclear to us.

Since the pipe burst, there has been a lot of talk of solutions—and it would seem nothing more than just talk.

## Broken Promises

The Provincial Government has enacted legislation requiring the Boat Harbour Treatment Facility to be closed by 2020. This would mean Northern Pulp could no longer dump deleterious substances into Boat Harbour. However, nothing of value has been done to ensure it will shut down or to prevent the outflow pipe from bursting again. Recent agreements with Northern Pulp point towards continued pollution.

The same government that committed to the 2020 shutdown goal recently made some major concessions in favour of Northern Pulp. In February, the government backed off on several environmental regulations that would have reduced the amount of effluent added to the harbour and the concentration of toxins in that effluent.

## BOAT HARBOUR'S PULP MILL EFFLUENT PROBLEM: A TIMELINE

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### Behind Closed Doors

Details of working agreements and consultations are consistently not made public to our Mi'kmaq community; details of agreements that provide context for the work of establishing an onsite wastewater treatment facility at Abercrombie Point have yet to be released. We found out that there would be no limit to the daily volume of wastewater discharge the same way everyone else did—in the newspapers.

How information is given or received seems to be systemic problem in so many of our First Nations communities. We now have many Chiefs who have acquired the practice of silence when answering to its community members. In my community in particular, the sharing of information is not a view the leadership shares with the community. Solicitors have seemingly urged our leaders to remain silent with any ongoing negotiations or procedures around settlements. The intricacies the province or mill create around the simplest inquiries can take on a life of their own when seeking answers to questions of the most basic human and indigenous rights.

Until material that supports the construction of an onsite wastewater treatment facility is made public, the notion that the Boat Harbour treatment center will close would seem to be a farce. Until there are public documents from the Legislative Assembly stating money has been set aside in the province's budget for the construction of an onsite wastewater treatment center, the closure of the Boat Harbour treatment center would seem to be a farce. Thus far, the government has given us no proof or good will to show that the Boat Harbour Treatment Facility will be closed in the next four years.

### Why Even Consult?

Of the many questions I have, the main question relates to the pulp mill's industrial approval for operation. We were once led to believe that the mill's officials and the province had to get the First Nations' consent and approval to issue the licenses to operate the mill. This is what consultation is for. How is it, then, that the permits were issued without the Mi'kmaq community of PLFN receiving notice?

These failures of consultation and information sharing are reflective of the generally poor relationship between First Nations and non-indigenous communities and governments across the country. To start bridging this gap, specifically regarding Boat Harbour, I want to see more inclusion of PLFN band members in the decision and information sharing around the clean up of Boat Harbour. As the cleanup continues, I want to see a procurement policy that offers contracts to Mi'kmaq companies first. These two actions would be "in good faith," as the government likes to say, and would start to reconcile this legacy of broken promises.

- **1965** – Pulp mill construction started. Scott Paper originally owned the mill, and since then, the mill has changed hands many times. The current owner is Northern Pulp. Pictou Landing First Nation (PLFN) received \$60,000 compensation for the loss of fishing grounds (this would be equivalent to \$450,00 in today's dollars).
- **1967** – Pulp mill wastewater started flowing into Boat Harbour. Solids would settle out, and the water eventually flowed into the Northumberland Strait.
- **1970s** – The Provincial Government and the mill spent millions upgrading the treatment process. The effluent was still toxic.
- **1993** – Following a lawsuit to force the cleanup of the harbour, PLFN and the federal government settled for \$35M.
- **1993, 1995, 2002, 2006, 2015** – The Nova Scotia government promised, through various agreements, to stop the pulp mill from using Boat Harbour as its effluent pond. The most recent commitment is to shut down effluent flow by 2020.
- **2002** – PLFN band council made a deal with the company; the company could still dump effluent in the harbour in exchange for \$1M lump sum and \$200,000 every year after that.
- **2008** – PLFN demanded Nova Scotia clean up Boat Harbour and stop pumping effluent into the harbour.
- **2016** – The provincial government conceded to Northern Pulp's wishes, allowing operations to continue without maximum effluent outflow limits, with weak water uptake limits, enabling toxins to continue to flow into the harbour.

**Jonathan Beadle** is a community organizer and father from Pictou Landing First Nation who has been working on the Boat Harbour clean-up issue for many years. He is also a photographer, and last year he displayed an exhibit in Stellarton focusing on the right to clean air, using his own community as the main subject.

# Sorting the Garbage

by **SADIE BEATON** /// EAC Staff

I've always told people Guysborough County is beautiful. Many of them haven't heard much about this relatively underpopulated part of the province. I describe the fragrant scrubby woods, the scrappy shorelines, and the quirky general stores that supply everything from locally made beef jerky to endless gossip and games of Euchre. **There was never a festering trash heap in my overly romantic accounts.**

"Just last week I was out for my daily walk and the smell coming from a garbage truck driving through the area was [so] bad that it was choking me," James Desmond tells me. It boggles my mind that we grew up in the same county.

Lincolntonville is a small African Nova Scotian community in the heart of Guysborough County. Residents like Desmond have been dealing with the impacts of a poorly designed first-generation dump in their backyard since the 1970s. As Desmond describes, "There were no checks and balances. I remember old transformers with the PCBs running out of them, dead animals, you name it. Everything and anything went into that landfill site."

**Environmental racism** refers to the disproportionate location of polluting industries and other environmental harms near communities of colour and the working poor, relative to white communities. In Nova Scotia, Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian communities are more likely to experience disproportionate environmental health risks.

It is also characterized by the lack of organization and political power that these communities have for advocating against the siting of industrial polluters and other environmental harms, the uneven negative impacts of environmental procedures, the uneven negative impacts of environmental policies, and the disproportionate access to environmental services such as garbage removal.

*(Courtesy of the ENRICH Project)*

In 2006, another large dump was sited nearby, adding insult to injury.

Lincolntonville residents have been complaining about the health effects related to leaking toxins for decades, and cadmium, phenol, and toluene have all been measured above upper health limits. Desmond has been speaking out on behalf of the community for over 40 years. "There's a high rate of cancer here. We don't know if it's associated with the landfill site or something getting in the water."

But the legacy of environmental racism in Lincolntonville goes way back, even beyond the various toxic sites and economic development slights that have angered the community over the years. In 1784, Black Loyalists arrived to claim a 3,000 acre land grant. Predictably though, the crown bungled the promise, and Lincolntonville was eventually built on a rocky ridge.

Sadly, Lincolntonville's experience is echoed across African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq communities. A 2002 study found that 30% of African Nova Scotians live within five kilometres of a dump. Mi'kmaq communities also bear an unfair burden of neighbouring toxic sites. And these disproportionate impacts are part of a larger racist pattern of displacement and blocked access to land and resources. As Desmond put it, "Waste and race go hand in hand here in Nova Scotia."

I'm struck by how easily I ignored the menace of environmental racism in Lincolntonville growing up. My affinity for nature, coupled with rural teen angst, had led me to environmental activism in the early 1990s. For many middle-class white kids in the early 1990s, this meant saving the whales and recycling paper. My high school administration quietly humored a student-led paper-recycling program, and then quietly sent the entire year's-worth of paper to the dump in Lincolntonville.

At around the same time as I was sorting banana peels out of classroom paper recycling boxes, Lincolnville was organizing against environmental racism in the form of a proposed second dump.

There was also an environmental justice movement burgeoning off my radar, largely in the US. These groups were keen to shift the unequal distribution of environmental harms. To do this, they also found they needed to create an alternative to the privileged white middle-class sensibility of the mainstream environmental movement.

In 2012, Dr. Ingrid Waldron spearheaded the Environmental Noxiousness, Racial Inequities, and Community Health (ENRICH) project, based out of the Dalhousie School of Nursing. ENRICH is a participatory, community-based research project that aims to explore the effects of toxic industries sited near Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian communities. The project has also worked to help strengthen the voices of marginalized communities like Lincolnville working to address the legacy of environmental racism.

It is an uncomfortable exploration, but looking back to my own activist roots, I can now recognize the obscuring lens of white privilege. My love of nature and desire to live in a clean environment are deeply informed by my own lived experiences. As Dr. Ingrid Waldron explains, “White privilege is the notion that white people enjoy material, social, and psychological benefits as a result of skin colour. It is a feature of our society, like other forms of privilege such as male privilege, privilege of class, and privilege of able-bodiedness.”

## TAKE ACTION WITH ENRICH:

- **Waste management buff?** Help ENRICH foster a community-based water testing program in Lincolnville.
- **Media and communications maven?** Help ENRICH spread the word about environmental racism in Nova Scotia.
- **Politically astute?** Join ENRICH's Community Capacity Building Working Group.
- **Event devotee?** Help ENRICH plan lectures, workshops, and other public events.

Contact Dr. Waldron for details at [iwaldron@dal.ca](mailto:iwaldron@dal.ca)

Meanwhile the powers that be continue to deny that environmental racism is at play in Lincolnville. Local MLA Lloyd Hines insists that race had nothing to do the dump's placement. As he told the Globe and Mail a few years ago, “It was located based on the greatest scientific evidence of the day: the type of soil in place. It had nothing to do with the fact the Lincolnville community was nearby. It's as simple as that.”

Desmond has dealt with more than his fair share of this kind of garbage. The community continues to demand adequate water, soil, and air testing, along with a share of the \$6 million dollars Desmond says the landfill facility generates each year. Like many in Lincolnville, he is weary of the fight for his community's survival. “We keep plugging and pushing, but it's been stressful for the community over the years, trying to deal with the unknown.”



We are all part of this picture. That means we all have a role in shifting it. Waldron agrees. “If white people have access to networks of powerful people and other resources—and if the communities want to make use of those networks and resources to assist them in fighting against environmental racism—they should make use of these. White privilege often means that white people have political alliances and communication networks that can help communicate affected community members' desires to those individuals who hold the power to make changes. Affected community members often don't have access to those power structures.”

At the same time, she cautions white allies to be wary of how their privilege plays out in the movement. Even the most well-meaning champions can end up speaking for (or over) marginalized communities. “This is all about checking in with the community members. The community has to remain in the driver's seat.”

Trying to come to terms with privilege is slowly helping me reshape my perceptions and ask more questions. I'm trying to incorporate environmental justice thinking into my research with the EAC and the Community Conservation Research Network. I'm still telling people Guysborough County is beautiful, of course. But from now on, the tenacity of communities like Lincolnville will be part of the story I tell, too.

**Sadie Beaton** is trying to get over that paper recycling betrayal that cemented her angry environmental activist identity in 1996. Maybe her next article won't be centred on her own privileged experience. She would like to acknowledge the help of kind, patient, and knowledgeable people working in Nova Scotia's environmental justice movement, including Dr. Ingrid Waldron, Lynn Jones, and James Desmond. She is also the Community Conservation Research Coordinator at the Ecology Action Centre.

# Nurturing a Resilient Nature

compiled by **EMMA BOARDMAN** /// EAC Staff

We asked **Makye Clayton**, a youth leader at Hope Blooms, and **Heidi Verheul**, an adult facilitator at Wild Child Forest School, to tell us about how their organizations connect a generation of young people, raised in a digital world, with their natural environment.

## Hope Blooms

by **MAKYE CLAYTON** /// Hope Blooms Volunteer

**What is Hope Blooms?** Hope Blooms is a community garden located on Cornwallis Street in Halifax, across the street from where I live. The garden is divided into lots so community members can grow their own food. Our programs teach youth and kids how to take care of the land and grow their own food. We also have a new greenhouse where we produce vegetables during the winter. A few years ago, we started making our own salad dressing, which was a success. We sell our dressing at the local market and now at Atlantic Superstore.

**What do you do there?** I started out as a volunteer when I was younger, and now I am a youth leader with Hope Blooms. I teach the kids in the neighbourhood how to take care of and grow their own vegetables. I also help with the business side of Hope Blooms. I work in the greenhouse, helping with growing the ingredients that go into making our dressing.

**Why did you get involved?** At first I got involved because it was so close to my home, and it was something different to do.

**What is your favourite thing about Hope Blooms?** My favourite part is learning. I am always learning something new working with the kids in the neighbourhood in the garden or on the business side of the program.

**Have you learned or accomplished something you're particularly proud of through Hope Blooms?** I am very proud of becoming a leader in the program. I learned that I can be more than a fun guy; I can be a leader in my community. I can be a leader anywhere.

**Hope Blooms**  
[hopeblooms.ca](http://hopeblooms.ca)



Youth Leader Kolade teaches how to harvest microgreens from Hope Blooms greenhouse.

PHOTO: Hope Blooms Staff

**Makye Clayton** is a 14 year old Oxford Jr. High student who has volunteered/worked with Hope Blooms for the past few years. In his spare time, Makye likes to play video games and upload videos of his playing to his YouTube channel.

# Wild Child Forest School

by **HEIDI VERHEUL** /// Wild Child Staff

One bright warm fall morning, we entered our space and sat in the clearing. With my back to the woods and facing the group, I was showing them how to put on deer ears (listening ears made by cupping hands behind your ears) when everyone's face lit up in wonder. My co-leader pointed behind me and mouthed "DEER." I carefully turned and a young lanky stag stepped out from the bushes right in front of us. Still and silent, all twelve of us watched as the deer nibbled at some twigs, scratched its ear with its hind leg, and then calmly moved up the trail and out of sight as a couple of walkers came around the bend. It was a magical moment reminding us that we share our communities with other living creatures.

At Wild Child Forest School, we attempt to reconnect the 21st century child and family to play, nature, and their inner sense of wonder by offering opportunities to play and explore in a natural setting. There are moments in forest school when we plan and lead activities and other times where we sit back and watch the children play and follow their own bliss. During one of the last sessions with a group of four and five year olds, one girl spent time on her own exploring a fairly large boulder, at least twice her height. She skillfully made an attempt to scale the sheer side. Focused on foot and hand holds, she kept three points of contact with the boulder at all times while using her arm and leg strength and thoughtfully ascended the boulder, triumphantly raising her hands to the sky when she made it. For her, this is just play and another morning in the woods with us while I was silently ticking off all the benefits that this small risk was achieving. These benefits include aspects of physical health, confidence in her assessment of her body and its abilities, practice focusing of the mind in a stimulating environment, and exploring the physical aspects of natural elements and forces.



PHOTO: Heidi Verheul

We see the children develop skills, attitudes, and deep understanding over the arc of many sessions. We have seen changes in fear responses to creepy crawlies. We have seen children boldly climb higher and higher up a tree, confidently identify edible plants and berries, use sharp tools safely, learn to calm the body and mind to observe nature, and awaken empathy and interest for the many life forms around them. The skills, attitudes, and awareness developed through the program can last a lifetime.

By sharing experiences, playing together, and learning through experience about the amazing non-human lives that we share our habitat with in Nova Scotia, we are inspiring a generation to care and act with respect for the whole environment.

“*Wild Child Forest School reminded our family that less is indeed more. My son loved being a part of this experience. He not only gained confidence and knowledge that he loves to pass on to his parents, but he has also found his escape. It is a place where he can relax, learn and grow into a well-rounded young man who can nurture others and the world around him.*”

*-Y. LeBlanc, parent*

**Wild Child Forest School**  
wildchildforestschool.ca

Hailing from the deep dark woods of Belmont, NS, **Heidi** came to Halifax to complete a Bachelor of Science (Biology) from Saint Mary's University and a Bachelor of Education from Mount Saint Vincent University. Through environmental education, she has been able to combine her love of biology, life, and nature with her passion of working with children.

# Food Desert in Bloom

by **KELSEY POWER** // Editorial Committee Volunteer

## Food Insecurity Meets Self-Sufficiency

Mulgrave Park didn't stand back and submit when its only local grocery store turned into an NSLC storefront a few years ago. It built garden beds and started growing fresh vegetables, and it hopes to also profit from the produce of a mobile market this spring.

"The most amazing thing is to see the young kids around here walking with a cucumber in their hand," said Crystal John, the executive director of the Mulgrave Park Caring and Learning Centre, and a lifelong resident of the community. She has plans to expand the community garden and high hopes for the mobile market. "A snack is a cucumber, or a couple of beans out of the garden. That makes a difference nutritionally. That's money their parents don't spend on packaged snacks; it eliminates their having to spend money on vegetables that are sometimes the most expensive."

This ever-resilient residential neighbourhood—also a public housing community of over 250 families, or about 700 people—is in the North End of Halifax, in what's known as a food desert: an urban area where it is difficult to buy affordable and healthy fresh food.

"To get to the closest grocery store you're climbing up a very steep hill with no direct bus route from a community where most people can't really afford, or don't really have, cars, and even if they do, it doesn't necessarily mean they have money to do giant grocery trips all the time," said Paige Farah, the executive director of Communities in Progress Association. She leads Progress in the Park, a community development initiative seeking to empower Mulgrave Park's residents through entrepreneurial action inspiring inclusiveness and challenging stigma. "To walk a half hour to the nearest grocery store in a city just for fresh produce seems a little ridiculous."

The largely marginalized community currently faces two options for those without their own set of wheels to find fresh produce on a year-round basis: to take one bus the length of the city to the Barrington Street Superstore, or to take two buses and walk to one of the franchise's other locations found on the corner of Young and Windsor Streets. Typically, those who do the latter taxi home, spending precious dollars that could have stocked more cupboard shelves.



## Food Deserts

"The food desert issue impacts people the most if they're not able, either economically or physically, to actually get themselves to a place where food is provided," said Erica Fraser, the community facilitator for the North End Community Circle, who cites correlations between people living in food deserts and having higher rates of diet related diseases, such as obesity or diabetes. However, the health impacts don't stop here. "There are so many mental illnesses that are related to micronutrient deficiencies. It just so happens that we get a lot of these micronutrients from fresh vegetables," she said.

Food security, defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, is something that exists when, "all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life." Household food insecurity is an issue a growing number of Canadians face as the cost of food rises.

A report called "Household Food Insecurity in Canada, 2013," states, "The majority of food insecure households (61.1%) were reliant on wages or salaries from employment." Aimee Carson, the EAC's senior community food coordinator, suggests precarious or low-wage employment is a factor contributing to this statistic.

The community has its own food bank, run voluntarily by its tenants' association, that is open on Saturday mornings from 10:00 am until noon. "It is always full. We serve 20 to 30 people every week," said John, who describes a long line up. To combat these food security issues, this North End community has taken a holistic approach. It has turned to capacity building and creating more sustainable methods of self-sufficiency. The geographic area now has close to 60 garden beds—13 of which belong to Mulgrave Park.

Farah, a former resident near the area, established these plots as an initiative of her association. She, along with volunteers, take on development tasks the neighbourhood's organizations wanted—such as gardens, or a playground—but were unable to build because of their set mandates. Three of these garden beds are specifically for Farah's programs. She offers food literacy and engagement opportunities, including community dinners or potlucks and cooking programs for youth that entail everything from harvesting the vegetables to eating the final product and eventually taking these recipes home. "It's not just about putting food on people's doorsteps and saying, 'Here you go, you can eat now.' It's about creating a culture around the system of getting that food and using it," she said.

## Mobile Food Market

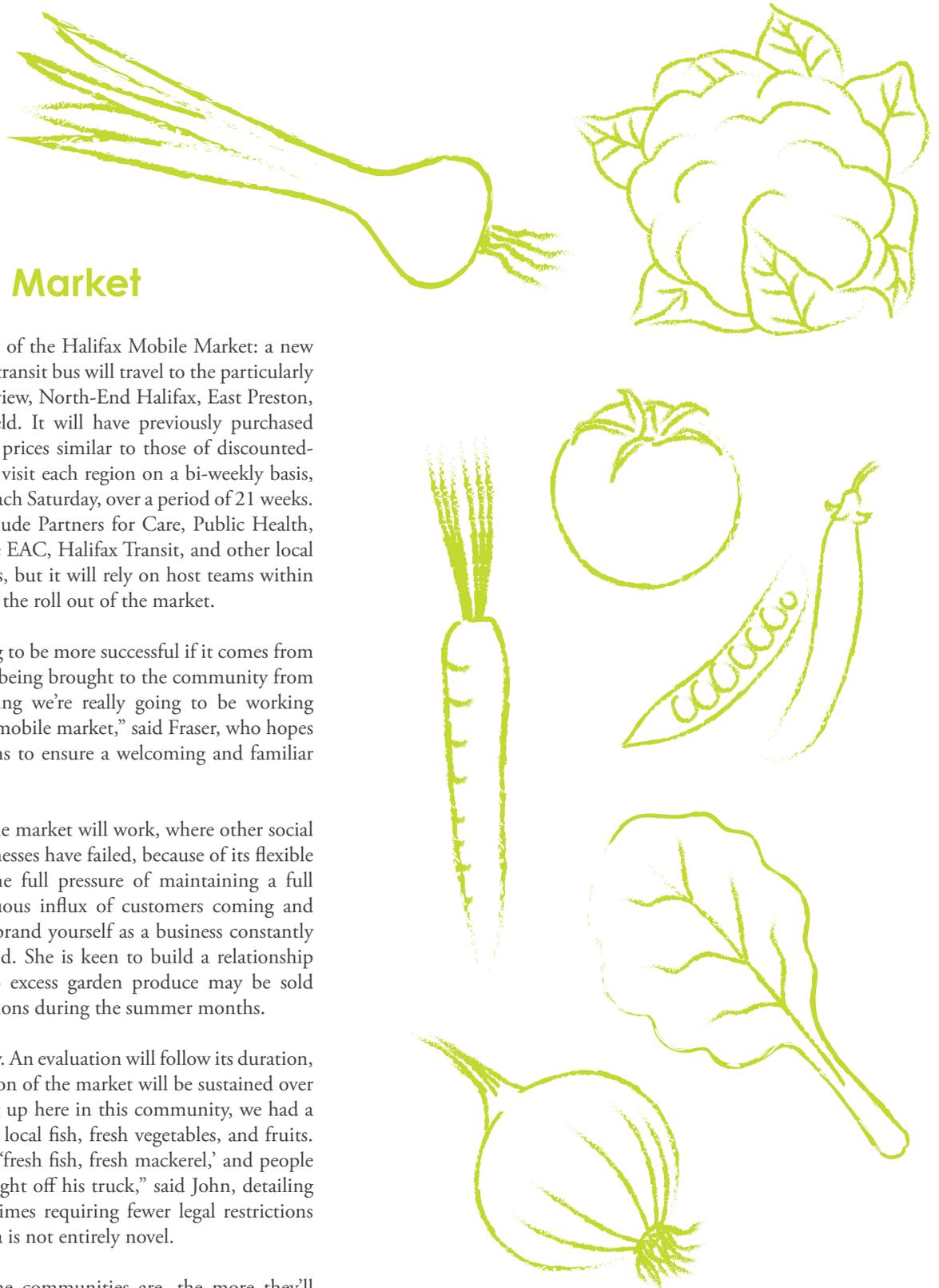
The area is also to be a host of the Halifax Mobile Market: a new pilot project where a public transit bus will travel to the particularly food insecure places of Fairview, North-End Halifax, East Preston, North Preston, and Spryfield. It will have previously purchased fresh produce to be sold at prices similar to those of discounted-grocery stores. The bus will visit each region on a bi-weekly basis, stopping at three locations each Saturday, over a period of 21 weeks. The project's organizers include Partners for Care, Public Health, the Office of the Mayor, the EAC, Halifax Transit, and other local organizations and businesses, but it will rely on host teams within each community to support the roll out of the market.

“Any kind of project is going to be more successful if it comes from the community rather than being brought to the community from the outside. That’s something we’re really going to be working toward addressing with the mobile market,” said Fraser, who hopes to work with the local teams to ensure a welcoming and familiar environment is provided.

Farah is confident the mobile market will work, where other social enterprise food related businesses have failed, because of its flexible model. “By taking away the full pressure of maintaining a full business—having a continuous influx of customers coming and going and having to really brand yourself as a business constantly offering something,” she said. She is keen to build a relationship with the mobile market so excess garden produce may be sold through the market’s operations during the summer months.

It’s set to launch in early May. An evaluation will follow its duration, and the hope is some iteration of the market will be sustained over time. “When I was growing up here in this community, we had a fish man who came in with local fish, fresh vegetables, and fruits. He would come in and say ‘fresh fish, fresh mackerel,’ and people would just come and buy right off his truck,” said John, detailing some nostalgia of simpler times requiring fewer legal restrictions and the notion that this idea is not entirely novel.

“The more self-sufficient the communities are, the more they’ll realize, ‘Oh, I don’t have to use the resources out there that are increasingly increasing in price,’” said John, who hopes residents learn to turn tomatoes to sauce for winter and wishes to install a small green house somewhere to grow food year round. “I think that’s the key to helping people. I just don’t understand why we’ve changed so much, I mean, when I grew up, my grandparents grew everything—they hardly went to the grocery store.”



**Kelsey Power** is a Halifax-based freelance journalist who enjoys sustainable living and contributing to the health of her community. She’s probably dancing or doing yoga when not reading or writing.

ILLUSTRATIONS: Dean Gallant / Derived from original by Freepic.com

# Action is our Middle Name

## COASTAL & WATER

### Building Resilience

This winter was full of sparks of inspiration for ongoing projects and new energy surrounding local water issues. Our incredible volunteer base has wowed us once again as new folks join Project Groundswell to help monitor Nova Scotia's groundwater resources. Our staff are participating in consultation around Shannon Park, a historic neighbourhood in Dartmouth being redeveloped by Canada Lands Corp. Across action areas, staff members are working to make sure the redevelopment includes sustainable stormwater management that accounts for climate change impacts, that coastal ecosystems are preserved, and that adequate transportation and access to food are built into the community. In March, we hosted a climate adaptation strategy session to strengthen the network of adaptation leaders and build resilient communities in Nova Scotia. As the Alton Gas methane storage project was recently approved, the Coastal and Water team has been working to support grassroots resistance to this project, which will put our water and our climate at risk.

## FOOD

### Building Community Resources

Winter hasn't slowed us down one bit! In December, we launched the newly designed Halifax Garden Network ([halifaxgardennetwork.com](http://halifaxgardennetwork.com)), which contains a map of garden locations across the city and tons of up-to-date resources for community gardeners. Also in Halifax, we underwent an extensive "rebuild" at the HUGS garden in Bayers Westwood, and we wrapped up a workshop series on food preservation. In early March, we co-hosted a public talk and workshop to support those wanting to bring more healthy, local, and sustainable food into Nova Scotian institutions, many of which feed large numbers of people every day. In Cape Breton and Cumberland County, we are developing four train-the-trainer workshops for local volunteer leaders. As part of our on-going efforts to support strong approaches in policy and evaluation, we developed comprehensive toolkits that can be used by our partners and others seeking to advance their work in the food sector.

## WILDERNESS

### 100 New Protected Areas!

We celebrated the new year with a major victory when, on December 29, the provincial government announced the designation of over 100 new protected wilderness areas, nature reserves and provincial parks. They include some of the most iconic and important natural eco-sites left in Nova Scotia like Rogues Roost near Halifax, Medway Lakes in Annapolis County, South Panuke in Lunenburg County, and Kluscap or Kelly's Mountain in Cape Breton. The new areas bring Nova Scotia to 12.36% protected areas, thereby meeting the longstanding goal enshrined in the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act of legally protecting "at least 12% of the total land mass of the province by 2015." Having campaigned for this for over a decade, we celebrated the announcement while at the same time reminding the government of the remaining commitments contained in the Parks and Protected Areas Plan of 2013. With full implementation, when the roughly one and a half percent of the province that is left to protect is designated, the province will see up to 13.9% terrestrial protection by 2020. So while there is still work to be done, the late December announcement is a huge step forward for nature conservation in Nova Scotia and a laudable achievement for government.

## MARINE

### Back to Court

While our court case against Environment Canada's approval of genetically modified (GM) salmon was dismissed, we filed an appeal on the grounds that the ruling creates too much uncertainty in how and where the GM fish can be used. We also traveled to London, UK, in February to object to the Marine Stewardship Council certification of 3Ps Atlantic Cod in order to prevent the fishery from being awarded a misleading "certified sustainable seafood" label.

## ENERGY

### Tackling Climate Change from Fern Lane to Paris

We sent our first official representative to international climate negotiations in December with the 21st Conference of Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Paris, France. Our Energy Campaign Coordinator had an incredible experience working alongside Canada's brightest (not to mention about 20,000 others from around the world) to support our new federal government in defending the rights of indigenous peoples and signing on to an agreement to protect the world's most vulnerable by limiting average global warming to 1.5 degrees celsius. At the end of two weeks of intense negotiations, Ministers of State declared the end of the fossil fuel era and the age of climate change denial finally came to a close. There's much work to come ensuring Nova Scotia works hand in hand with other provinces to keep Canada's climate action promises. Luckily, our Efficiency Coordinator is helping more and more people conserve energy and save money, including the EAC itself—our newly renovated building is a prime example of the future we need and deserve.

## BUILT ENVIRONMENT

### Growth and Mobility

We were excited to see the first tentative maps for Halifax's Green Network Plan at a recent stakeholder session. The municipality has mapped all the values of our natural assets—including habitats, agriculture, tourism, recreation, and water—and combined them into a map of priority landscapes. With this understanding of our landscapes in hand, we can craft rules to make sure development doesn't undermine everything we value in our air, water and wilderness. We continue working with the more than 50 members of Our HRM Alliance to ensure the Green Network results in a consistent, strong set of protected landscapes to direct growth to where we need it: our rural, suburban, and urban main streets. We have also supported the municipality's Integrated Mobility Plan that will align transit and development to support each other. We hope the plan will result in a new focus on Bus Rapid Transit as the right solution for Halifax.

## TRANSPORTATION

### Keeping it Wheel

Show your support for Nova Scotian cyclists again! Our famous "One Metre Rule" magnets are back! Rep the rule and show cyclists you care. Since 2008, over 10,000 people (quintuple digits, baby!) have received Making Tracks training for skateboarding, cycling, inline skating, scooter, and pedestrian skills. Many thanks to all the facilities that have hosted training sessions and to those that used their leadership training to start programs for youth! Making Tracks is so great, in fact, that folks in Ontario and beyond are taking notice and want to be licensed to use the program. Making Tracks will be coming to schools in the Greater Toronto Area in the near future. We have proudly partnered with Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) to give new Canadians the gift of bikes and Making Tracks cycling education. Haligonians generously donated over 150 bikes for the program, and have been volunteering their time to fix them up!

# The Seasonal Gourmet

by **JULIA KEMP** /// Volunteer

## Rhubarb Vinaigrette

Let's talk spring salads, shall we? Now is the time of year I get an overwhelming craving for lighter, raw vegetables in my diet, and there's no better way to do that than with a beautiful spring salad. After a long winter of cooking up root vegetables, beans, and other pantry goods, spring eating feels somewhat effortless to me. All those tender greens (lettuce, spinach, and beet greens), peas, spring turnips, and radishes are easy to slice and plunk on a plate. Add some protein (boiled egg, cheese, chicken, fish, nuts, or beans), and all you need is a good dressing to seal the deal! Give this Rhubarb Vinaigrette a try. Rhubarb replaces the lemon in this recipe, providing a tart flavour that balances nicely with the honey while also creating a thick and creamy texture when blended.



### INGREDIENTS

**1** rhubarb stalk, thinly sliced

**1 ½ tbsp.** honey

**3 tbsp.** rice vinegar (red wine or raspberry vinegar work well too)

**2 tsp.** grainy Dijon mustard (or to taste)

**fat pinch** of salt

**¼ cup** mild-flavoured oil

### DIRECTIONS

In a small saucepan, simmer the rhubarb with ¼–½ cup water for five minutes or until very soft. The amount of water depends on the size of your rhubarb stalk. If it's small, use ¼ cup, but if it's hefty, use a little more. Remove your pot from the heat and set aside to cool. Put the cooked rhubarb into a blender with the honey, vinegar, mustard, and salt. Pulse until smooth. With the motor running, slowly pour in the oil. Adjust seasoning to taste. Store in an airtight jar in the refrigerator and drizzle over salad just before serving.

Lightly adapted from a recipe by Julie Van Rosendaal.

**Julia Kemp** is a Registered Holistic Nutritional Consultant working with clients to enhance their health, strengthen their food knowledge, and expand their cooking skills. Individual and group cooking classes available at [www.juliakemp.ca](http://www.juliakemp.ca)

# Action in Verse

by SAMANTHA STERNBERG

## First Signs

a song through the window  
comes to rest on cotton sheets.

behind your eyes flickers  
a red-winged blackbird.

how you love that straightforward name  
pinned to the liquid gurgling konk-ke-ree.

watching a bare tree branch in a far away park;  
that year the bird appeared in everyone's poems.



A vertical advertisement for Jules Chamberlain, a real estate agent. It features a photograph of a smiling man with glasses and a beard, wearing a light-colored button-down shirt and blue jeans. Overlaid on the photo is the text "NICE MOVES" in large, bold, red and blue letters. Below the photo is the "Red Door REALTY" logo, which consists of the word "Red" in a red box and "DOOR REALTY" in a white box. At the bottom of the ad, on a black background, is the text "JULESCHAMBERLAIN.CA", "9028176007", and "AGENTIMMOBILIER/REALTOR®".

ILLUSTRATION: Dean Gallant  
Derived from original photo by naturespicsonline.com

The Ecology Action Centre celebrates the essential support of our

# SUSTAINABILITY ALLIES



Ecology Action Centre

LEARN MORE

[www.ecologyaction.ca/sustainabilityallies](http://www.ecologyaction.ca/sustainabilityallies)

## OPERATIONS STAFF

Policy Director: **MARK BUTLER** (902) 429-5287 /// action@ecologyaction.ca  
 Managing Director: **MAGGY BURNS** (902) 429-5287 /// centre@ecologyaction.ca  
 Financial Director: **CARLA VANDENBERG** (902) 442-0254 /// eac@ecologyaction.ca  
 Office Manager: **JULIA MCRAE** (902) 442-0254 /// julia@ecologyaction.ca  
 Administrative Assistant: **CORMEKIA CLAYTON** (902) 454-5226 /// info@ecologyaction.ca  
 Digital Communications Manager: **EMMA BOARDMAN** (902) 429-2202 /// web@ecologyaction.ca  
 Membership and Development Coordinator: **RYAN O'QUINN** (902) 442-0300 /// ryan@ecologyaction.ca  
 Membership Canvass Coordinator: **DANA LIPNICKI** /// dana@ecologyaction.ca  
 Volunteer and Events Coordinator: **JOANNA BULL** (902) 454-5226 /// communications@ecologyaction.ca  
 Fern Lane Expansion Manager: **PHOEBE OWEN** /// phoebe@ecologyaction.ca  
 Volunteer and Materials Manager for Fern Lane Expansion: **EMMA NORTON** (902) 442-0199 /// efficiency@ecologyaction.ca  
 Membership Officer: **SARAH WILKIN** /// sarah.wilkin@ecologyaction.ca  
 Logistics Technician: **BRAD MCINNIS** /// brad@ecologyaction.ca  
 Ecology & Action Magazine Advertising: **CORMEKIA CLAYTON** /// info@ecologyaction.ca

## PROJECT STAFF

### Membership

Membership Retention Officer: **ROWAN SWAIN** (902) 429-0924 /// membership@ecologyaction.ca

### Built Environment

Our HRM Coordinator: **TRISTAN CLEVELAND** (902) 454-6199 /// hrm@ecologyaction.ca

### Coastal & Water

Freshwater Coordinator: **JOCELYNE RANKIN** (902) 442-5046 /// water@ecologyaction.ca  
 Coastal Adaptation Coordinator: **ROBIN TRESS** (902) 442-5046 /// coastal@ecologyaction.ca  
 Bird Conservation Coordinator: **MEREDITH FLANNERY** (902) 442-0210 /// mflannery@ecologyaction.ca  
 Bird Conservation Outreach Coordinator: **PATTI GREEN** (902) 442-0210 /// pattiegreen@ecologyaction.ca

### Energy

Energy Coordinator: **CATHERINE ABREU** (902) 442-0199 /// acsec@ecologyaction.ca  
 Energy Efficiency Coordinator: **EMMA NORTON** (902) 442-0199 /// efficiency@ecologyaction.ca  
 Energy Officer: **STEPHEN THOMAS** (902) 442-0199 /// stephen@ecologyaction.ca

### Food

Community Food Coordinator: **AIMEE CARSON** (902) 442-1077 /// aimee@ecologyaction.ca  
 Community Food Researcher: **MIRANDA COBB** (902) 442-1077 /// miranda@ecologyaction.ca  
 Community Food Programmer (Halifax): **JENNIFER ORGAN** (902) 442-1077 /// jenorgan@ecologyaction.ca  
 Community Food Coordinator (Cape Breton): **GEORGIA MCNEIL** /// georgia@ecologyaction.ca  
 Community Food Coordinator (Cumberland): **SU MORIN** /// su@ecologyaction.ca  
 Community Food Coordinator: **SATYA RAMEN** (902) 442-1077 /// foodaction@ecologyaction.ca

### Marine

Marine Conservation Coordinator: **SUSANNA FULLER** (902) 446-4840 /// marine@ecologyaction.ca  
 Marine Campaign Coordinator: **KATIE SCHLEIT** (902) 446-4840 /// kschleit@ecologyaction.ca  
 Marine Policy Coordinator: **SHANNON ARNOLD** (902) 446-4840 /// sarnold@ecologyaction.ca  
 Sustainable Seafood Coordinator: **COLLEEN TURLO** (902) 446-4840 /// cturlo@ecologyaction.ca  
 GM Salmon Coordinator: **CALINDA BROWN** (902) 442-0209 /// salmon@ecologyaction.ca  
 Marine Issues Project Staff: **HEATHER GRANT** (902) 446-4840 /// heatherg@ecologyaction.ca  
 Sustainable Fisheries Campaigner: **JUSTIN CANTAFIO** (902) 446-4840 /// jcantafio@ecologyaction.ca  
 Marine Conservation Intern: **CHELSEY LANDRY** (902) 446-4840 /// clandry@ecologyaction.ca

### Transportation

Making Tracks Coordinator: **JULIAN WEST** /// mt@ecologyaction.ca

### Wilderness

Forestry Program Coordinator: **MATT MILLER** (902) 442-5008 /// forests@ecologyaction.ca  
 Wilderness Coordinator: **RAYMOND PLOURDE** (902) 442-5008 /// wilderness@ecologyaction.ca

# Recent Successes

- Completed a study of our **Making Tracks** cycling program that showed measured increases in student bike safety knowledge, skills, confidence, and ride frequency, including a **20% increase** in bike trips.
- Celebrated over a decade of campaigning to protect at least **12% of Nova Scotia** with the December 2015 provincial announcement of over **100 new protected** wilderness areas, nature reserves and provincial parks.
- Supported the **Halifax Integrated Mobility Plan**, which could transform the way we invest in transportation to prioritize people and transit. Halifax Council voted in February 2016 to launch the plan.
- Mobilized **over 1,500 volunteer hours** over nine months to help make our **#EACnextlevel** green office renovation a reality.
- Helped Mountain Equipment Co-op (**MEC**), our Sustainability Ally, organize their largest winter run ever. On January 31, **nearly 300 runners** raised **over \$1,900** for the EAC's work on the Halifax Greenbelt.

## WHAT WILL YOUR LEGACY BE?

Leave a gift to the EAC in your will to ensure a healthy future for generations to come. Please call us at 902-442-0300 or email us at [ryan@ecologyaction.ca](mailto:ryan@ecologyaction.ca)



"As long time proud supporters with passionate concerns for the environment, it was easy for us to decide to leave a gift to the EAC in our wills. We have long respected the work EAC does for the environment and know that its strong voice must continue into the future." - Karen Hollett & Fred Harrington

**WANT TO KNOW WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO JOIN  
WITH 4,500 OTHER VOICES FOR CHANGE?**

*Become a member of the Ecology Action Centre today and find out.*

**HOW?**

*Sign up in person with a member of our membership team.*

**CALL US AT 902-429-2202**

**WALK, BUS OR BIKE TO OUR OFFICE AT**

*2705 Fern Lane, Halifax, NS, B3K 4L3*

*[www.ecologyaction.ca](http://www.ecologyaction.ca)*