

# FALL 2025



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## Ecology Action Centre

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

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

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# Letter from the Centre

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

In recent months, the need for collective action has become increasingly clear. Here in Nova Scotia, we are witnessing the dismantling of environmental safeguards and an intensifying push toward unchecked resource extraction. Globally, the rise of fascism, authoritarianism, xenophobia and regressive politics is reshaping societies and putting people and ecosystems at risk. It can feel daunting at times, but moments like these also underscore a fundamental truth: transformative change emerges when communities organize and act in solidarity.

Community action can take many forms. It manifests in people marching through the streets, raising their voices to demand justice. Other times it is subtler, less visible, but no less powerful: neighbours sharing knowledge and resources, volunteers organizing in their communities or individuals speaking up in council chambers and classrooms. Each of these acts – big or small – help to shape a more just and sustainable future.

In this edition of Ecology & Action, you will find stories that highlight some of the many faces of community action. From grassroots organizing against fossil fuels in

Bangladesh, to farmers markets, to the ongoing movement to safeguard nature in Mi'kma'ki, these examples remind us that change is not only possible, it is already happening. Each of these stories speaks to the resilience and creativity of communities fighting for ecological and social justice.

At its core, community action is an act of collective imagination and resolve. It is about refusing to accept that harmful industries or regressive policies are inevitable. It is about creating hope, and then building the systems that make that hope real. It proves that we can build alternatives rooted in care, equity and sustainability.

We hope the stories in these pages inspire you to reflect on your own role within this broader movement. Whether through advocacy, organizing, education, or the act of simply tending to community and place, you are a part of a larger movement for a better world. Together, we can meet this moment with strength, compassion, hope, determination and action. No one can do everything, but everyone can do something.

## WHAT WILL YOUR LEGACY BE?

Make a legacy gift to the Ecology Action Centre



When you leave a gift to the EAC in your will, your commitment to support environmental protection beyond your lifetime ensures that we can keep our voice independent and strong for years to come. Use your legacy to build a sustainable and equitable future for all.

To discuss your lasting impact, please contact,  
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## Advocate

There are many reasons why we are located in Atlantic Canada, but the greatest reason is simply that **WE LOVE IT HERE**. We strive to make our home a better place for ourselves and our children, as we pursue economic growth, social progress, and environment protection in a sustainable manner.

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# Mining Coxheath: The Dark Side of Copper

The area threatened by the proposed copper mine.  
PHOTOS: FlyHi Productions

by **BELLE TEIXEIRA** /// EAC Volunteer

Just north of the Sydney River on the Island of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, lies the small yet vibrant, tight knit community of Coxheath. Renowned for its rich history and nature trails, Coxheath is a sublime example of Cape Breton's natural beauty. It supports important aquatic and terrestrial habitat for a large variety of species, including foxes, pheasants, eagles and fish.

Hidden beneath the soil, CoxHeath has a natural copper reserve that has caught the eye of mining exploration firm Nova Copper Inc. The firm is looking to explore, re-open and greatly expand a century-old copper mine for the extraction of copper and other metals. The possibility of mining metals around key water sources in the area, located less than 200m from homes, has the community quite concerned.

That's where the Keep Coxheath Clean Association (KCCA) comes in. KCCA was formed to raise awareness and educate the public about the potential impact of mining on the community and the environment, including bringing evidence to decision-makers about the risk of metal mining. KCCA has conducted research over the past two years to respond to this particular mining project, looking into the way the project is being handled by our government and the toll it will take on the environment and people of Coxheath and surrounding communities.

The proposed open pit sulfide ore copper mine works by using explosives to remove massive amounts of rock from the surface of the earth, followed by extracting and processing copper ore using chemicals and large machinery. Once metal mining begins, it's not a question of whether it will cause contamination, but when. Mining for metals has yet to be carried out without environmental contamination, which is why it's important to ensure selected sites are far away from vulnerable areas. Otherwise, there is a high risk that contamination will cause irreparable damage to local ecosystems.

Copper is an essential mineral in the production of batteries, electric vehicles and renewable energy systems. As we transition towards creating and using more clean, renewable energy, the global demand for copper is rising. This makes it more important than ever to establish good practices that safeguard the land, water and air for future generations without disrupting the careful balance of nature.

With approximately 1,482 mm of precipitation annually, the proposed Coxheath mining site is in one of the wettest climates in Canada, making it a very vulnerable location. According to research undertaken by KCCA, the further development of copper mines on the hills of Coxheath is very likely to result in environmental contamination that would threaten both residents and ecosystems. KCCA spoke with local Mi'kmaw leaders about the project, resulting in Mi'kmaw Elder Albert Marshall writing a letter against the mining project.

Even mines that boast of being sustainable and having practices in place to reduce emissions can jeopardize everything from property values to water access and air quality. This particular mine has the ability to have a severe impact on the environment of Coxheath and the quality of life for its citizens. It will lead to the introduction of toxins into air and water, cause deforestation and disrupt natural ecosystems. Developing a mine in this area would threaten water that hundreds of residents depend on through contaminating wells, rivers, watersheds, aquifers and lakes, including the Bras d'Or Lakes UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

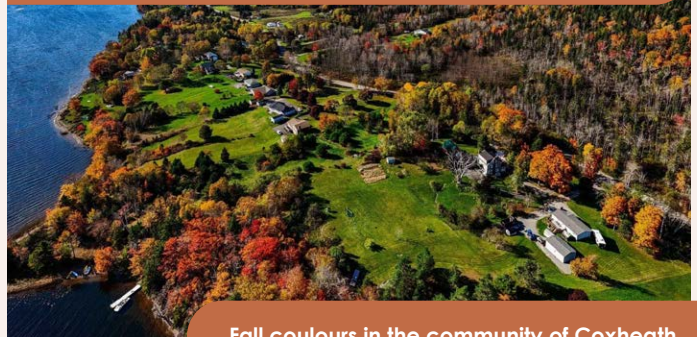
It also threatens habitat for hundreds of species. Coxheath's Blackett's Lake is home to numerous fish species, including the northernmost known population of Yellow Lampmussel, a species of freshwater mussel crucial to maintaining the lake's ecosystem. With only two watersheds left in Canada for them to call home, the proposed mining within the watershed puts this vulnerable population of mollusks in a precarious position.

The reasoning behind further developing copper mines in Nova Scotia is the same used to justify most resource extraction; to help boost the economy, yield crucial minerals and provide jobs. But Coxheath has been through this before. The site at Coxheath Hills was previously mined for brief periods in the 1800s and early 1900s but was ultimately deemed as unproductive and abandoned. Despite multiple unsuccessful attempts to revive the project and the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables confirming that this site is a low-grade copper-ore deposit, there are once again threats of industrial mining development.

## TAKE ACTION

Sign the Keep Coxheath Clean Association online petition at [keepcoxheathclean.org](https://keepcoxheathclean.org) to show support and share with others.

Reach out to relevant decision-makers to share your concerns about the wide-reaching effects of the proposed copper mine and its effects on waterways in the area, including in the Bras d'Or Lakes UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.



Fall colours in the community of Coxheath.

This site has proven over the years that it is not a viable mining location. This means the economic benefits will likely be short-lived, resulting in environmental costs that could last for generations. So, why is it being proposed for mining development? The people of Coxheath refuse to let their community become a sacrifice to pad the pockets of investors and help politicians save face by bringing mining jobs to the region. But what's the point in bringing jobs to a community that will be irreparably harmed in the process?

Current data suggests the demand for copper will keep growing, increasing to 350 per cent by 2050 if the world continues at this trajectory. The increase in global demand for these metals will put increasing pressure on small communities with copper deposits. As more large companies will want to acquire the resources beneath these communities, the communities will need to be prepared to advocate for themselves and their environments.

KCCA and the people of Coxheath are working tirelessly to halt this process before it begins and have demonstrated the importance of community-led advocacy in protecting the health and future of local communities. The Keep Coxheath Clean Association continues to raise awareness of the potential impact of this copper mine on the people and the area, while also bringing scientific evidence to decision-makers and the public about the risk of metal mines on Coxheath Hills.

**Belle** (she/her) is a communications professional with a specialty in environmental storytelling. She is a visual artist with a passion for the natural world and is an avid hiker, paddler and scuba diver.

# Community Action at the Farmers Market:

## THE IMPACT OF PRESENCE AND SUPPORTING LOCAL

by **EMILY FEARON** /// EAC Staff

The light through the windows of the historic building housing the Halifax Brewery Farmers Market shines on a table covered by leafy greens, bright edible flowers and purple eggplant displayed on red and white gingham. Outside, on this Saturday morning, quarts of pears, tomatoes and blueberries gleam in the sun. Everywhere, people peruse, eating samples of melon from a farm stand, breathing in the smells from food vendors.

Alison Lynes, co-op program coordinator at the Brewery Market, believes participation at the market – by both shoppers and vendors — creates “moments of magic” as people have the opportunity to meet and build common ground. In other words, presence at the market creates opportunities for positive change.

“We don’t care if you exchange money or not, you can exchange pleasantries,” she says. “Just keep showing up, that’s what makes the difference.”

This encouragement to participate in farmers markets falls within the context that Nova Scotia’s local food consumption rate sits at just 14 per cent of our diets. Lynes says with all of life’s demands and everyday burdens, she’s reluctant to tell anyone they “need to do better” or change their lives to buy local.

Because shopping at farmers markets isn’t possible for everyone, the Brewery Market team has been troubleshooting barriers that keep people away from the market. They are aiming intentionally, through training and relationship-building, to be anti-racist and decolonial in their work. Among other initiatives, they participate in the Nourishing Communities program, run through Farmers’ Markets of Nova Scotia (FMNS), to give participants “market bucks” which are tokens with monetary value.

Surveys from Nourishing Communities show 95 per cent of participants feel an increased sense of community belonging, states Justin Cantafio, executive director at FMNS.

**Emily** (she/they) loves the abundance of summer. She is the EAC’s relationship development officer.



Fresh vegetables on display at the Warehouse Market in Kijikuktuk/Halifax. PHOTOS: Emily Fearon

A farmers market reconnects people with their community and their food system, Cantafio says. Markets are spaces where people are welcome to come and simply be, with no payment required for entry. Many hold community booths where groups, clubs and organisations share information. For these reasons, Cantafio believes farmers markets in Nova Scotia are manifestations of community action.

Vicki Madziak, former senior community food coordinator with the EAC, says she is seeing a shift in our food systems towards a food “hub” model, like the Halifax Regional Food Hub and The Station Food Hub Company in the Annapolis Valley. Hubs streamline distribution, cutting overhead, reducing supply chain steps and increasing Nova Scotians’ access to local food.

The Warehouse Market in Halifax’s North End is a great example. This market is full of local produce, supplied directly from Abundant Acres farm — open six days each week year-round. Whatever they can’t grow themselves, they source from other local producers with whom they have close relationships.

The community shows up in turn. Kelly Wilson, manager and steward of The Warehouse Market since 2017, says there has been exponential growth every year, especially in the market’s farm share boxes, their version of a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program.

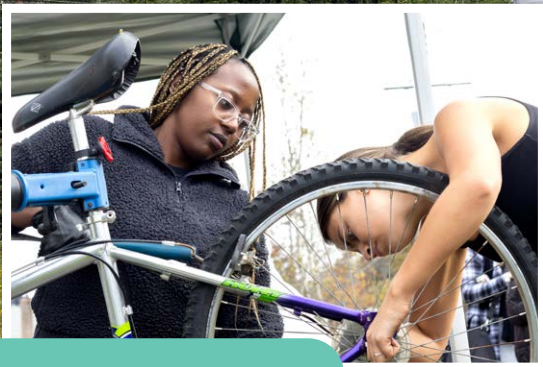
Madziak emphasizes how CSAs are a powerful way for people to support producers. Through sign-ups for the program, farmers get funding upfront and can plan crops and harvesting. This cycle of people’s investment going straight to the farm, which returns as good food, is a type of community action Wilson says they see a lot.

Shopping local (every bit counts!), supporting community gardens and advocating for better food policy are some of the ways Cantafio suggests Nova Scotians can take action. He dwells on the impact of sharing meals together. “To eat is to commune,” he says. “Doing that together I think is the ultimate form of action.”

# Pedaling Progress:

## THE STORY OF THE POP-UP BIKE HUB

by **BIANCA MARZAN** /// EAC Volunteer



The PUBH crew hard at work.  
PHOTO: Sara Farias



The PUBH ready to begin their day.  
PHOTO: Matt Bawtinheimer

Before the town had fully awakened, the trailer rolled in. Soon, Ecology Action Centre (EAC) volunteers began taking names. Bikes lined up, and curiosity rippled through the morning air. Some folks lingered, studying the turns of bolts, while others dropped off their bikes and vanished into the day.

The Pop-Up Bike Hub is the latest evolution in the EAC's history of cycling initiatives. Starting with the Bike Again program in the 1990s, communities combated rising maintenance costs through a DIY repair space, complete with tools and used parts, alongside repaired bikes sold at an affordable rate.

A few years later, Welcoming Wheels emerged, which supported newcomers with bicycles and safe cycling education, a need that surged during the onset of the Syrian Refugee Crisis.

The success of these programs revealed a gap: most repair shops are located in concentrated urban centres, leaving those who live in remote or rural areas without access. The Pop-Up Bike Hub solves that problem, bringing services directly to those who need them the most. "We always do our best to arrive in a community with the goal of listening first," said Matt Bawtinheimer, the program coordinator. "Community members will tell you what kind of programming they want, as long you don't pretend to know everything."

**Bianca** (she/her) is a grade 12 student at Dartmouth High School who finds joy in cycling, connecting with nature and writing about collaborative initiatives that inspire environmental awareness and long-lasting change.

I booked a phone interview with Bawtinheimer during his final busy days working in the position, just before transitioning into a new role in another organization. Jovial and animated, he had led his team in working with communities across Nova Scotia/Mi'ma'ki, increasing equitable access to transportation throughout the region. His philosophy (listen first, act next) has blossomed into bike barbeques, rodeos and giveaways: events framed by discussions with local leaders and community needs.

In 2020, the hub was featured by the CBC for its role in breaking gender norms. When I asked how Bawtinheimer supported his predominantly female team, he highlighted the importance of creating a safe space in a field that is traditionally male-dominated.

"The best way to learn is by getting your hands dirty, without being judged for it," he explained. "Anything that breaks is just another chance to figure things out."

The team's diversity has been particularly inspiring for youth, who learn firsthand that anyone can be both a cyclist and mechanic. More than anything, Bawtinheimer hopes the initiative offers knowledge and confidence.

"We want bikers to feel like they can repair and maintain their bikes on their own," he explained. "That keeps bikes out of landfills and communities rolling all year round."

As the trailer rolls onto its next stop, it carries with it a quiet but steady revolution: the rise of a self-sustaining cycling community.

# Beneath the Blades: COMMUNITY VOICES IN EELGRASS RESTORATION

A lobster takes refuge in an eelgrass bed off the Southwestern shore of Nova Scotia. PHOTO: Nick Hawkins

by **MADISON (MADDY) CAMERON, FRIDA KAEUBLER-DELONG, LAUREN WATT** /// EAC Volunteers

## Lauren: Finding Kinship and Wonder Underwater

Eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) is just one of the many species of marine seagrasses, the only group of true plants to live and reproduce in the ocean. It benefits ecosystems through coastal erosion control, increasing water quality and mitigating climate change by absorbing and storing atmospheric carbon at higher rates than land plants. The threats these plants face include warming water, storms, invasive species, boating/anchoring, disease and pollution. But the Community Eelgrass Restoration Initiative (CERI), a partnership between the Future of Marine Ecosystems lab at Dalhousie University and the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, is utilizing student volunteers, community volunteers and citizen scientists to protect the eelgrass habitats Mi'kma'ki has and restore the ones that have been lost.

Like many students, I first discovered CERI through a class when Dr. Kristina Boerder gave a guest lecture on the importance of eelgrass habitats. I was immediately drawn to volunteering for many reasons, one of which is right there in the name: community. Restoration is a much harder battle without the help of students, local volunteers and the guiding principle of Etuaptmumk (Two-Eyed Seeing). There's a real kinship that forms when people work together on something bigger than themselves.

Another reason I joined was my love of scuba diving. Volunteering with CERI has let me combine my passion for diving with marine science. I float weightlessly above lush green meadows as sunlight dances gold across the swaying blades. Fish schools drift by, crabs scuttle below, and a whole landscape of life is revealed – with only my bubbles breaking the silence. All the while I measure eelgrass bed coverage, density and biodiversity, as well as help a fellow student collect reproductive shoots for seed storage research.

While my connection to CERI began through diving, for other volunteers the experience has taken different forms – sometimes in the lab, sometimes in the field, and always alongside community members. Frida's story highlights the many ways students get involved beyond diving.

## Frida: Learning, Replanting and Connecting with Community

Over the past year with CERI, I've been fortunate to assist with a wide range of projects. During the winter, when fieldwork paused, I was in the lab helping an honours student and a researcher with their eelgrass work, which included counting new reproductive and non-reproductive shoots of eelgrass plants. Once summer arrived, I joined eelgrass meadow surveys through snorkelling, participated in harvesting and replanting and even helped with blue carbon research through sediment coring, which was a highlight for me.

As a student of both sustainability and marine biology, this work has deepened my understanding of how marine and terrestrial systems are interconnected. Volunteering with CERI has given me space to reflect on what sustainability and conservation truly mean in practice. Some moments are unforgettable – like standing over a site once lush with eelgrass, now barren due to human impact. Just as unforgettable, though, was my first time replanting in one of those areas, helping bring new life back to the seafloor.

CERI has also given me lasting connections with community members, opportunities I wouldn't have had in the classroom. These experiences wouldn't be possible without the incredible team and volunteers behind the project, and I'm deeply grateful to be part of it. Like me, other students have found their own unique pathways through CERI. For Maddy, the work began with a close look at eelgrass biodiversity.



Maddy Cameron and Dr. Kristina Boerder at one of the CERI restoration sites. PHOTO: Maddy Cameron



Lauren Watt dives off the coast of Nova Scotia to conduct eelgrass surveys. PHOTO: Lauren Watt

## Madison (Maddy): Discovering Biodiversity and Sharing the Story

Since joining CERI in September 2024, I've had the chance to contribute to a wide range of projects from fieldwork, honours research assistance and community outreach.

One of my first projects involved supporting a fellow student, Marin, with her honours research on eelgrass meadow biodiversity. Using baited remote underwater videos (BRUV), she tracked species living in different meadows. Reviewing over 100 clips, I saw more than 10 species. From American eels and Atlantic tomcod to shrimp, pollock and crabs – all dependant on these habitats. These short glimpses revealed just how much life thrives in eelgrass meadows, often unnoticed.

As I continued volunteering, I joined snorkel-based fieldwork, helped with harvesting and planting, and participated in outreach events to engage the public. My favourite was a day working with the University of Calgary and youth from Pictou Landing First Nation to name microbes off the coast of Mi'kma'ki – a reminder of how wide-ranging marine research and conservation can be.

### TAKE ACTION

Visit [ecologyaction.ca/eelgrass](https://ecologyaction.ca/eelgrass) to learn more about eelgrass and the fight to protect and restore this vital seagrass.

Being part of CERI has taught me practical science skills, but it has also shown me the value of working with a passionate, collaborative team. Marine conservation has always been close to my heart, but CERI has deepened my sense of purpose and connection to protecting the environments that sustain us all.

## Closing reflection

Though each of our experiences has been different, they are all rooted in the same meadow – eelgrass. Whether through diving, replanting, research or outreach, volunteering with CERI has connected us to one another, to communities across Mi'kma'ki and to the ecosystems we strive to protect. Together, we've learned that restoration is not only about planting shoots in the seafloor, but also about planting seeds of community, knowledge and hope for the future.

**Madison (Maddy) Cameron** (she/her) is a fourth-year Marine Biology major, **Lauren Watt** (she/her) is a fifth-year Marine Biology major, and **Frida Keebler-DeLong** (she/her) is a fourth-year student, with a double major in Marine Biology and Sustainability and a minor in Environmental Science. This article reflects their work experience with the Community Eelgrass Restoration Initiative (CERI) at Dalhousie University.

# From Burnout to Belonging:

## REIMAGINING CLIMATE ACTIVISM THROUGH ART

by SAPPHO THOMPSON /// EAC Volunteer



Handmade puppets courtesy of North Barn Theatre in the 2025 People's Parade.  
PHOTO: Hamish Gordon

***“Climate action is exhausting.” “I just burn out.”  
“It’s too overwhelming to even think about.”***

As I reflected on the topic of community action, my mind was haunted by the voices of my peers, echoing feelings of weariness and concern about the climate movement. The narrative of environmental action being draining is not a foreign one – to myself and many others in the climate movement. I couldn’t help but want to address this, so I began to ask myself why. Why do people avoid doing this work, and why is burnout such a familiar feeling? Why does the climate movement feel so scary?

In discussion with other climate activists and personal reflection on my own identity within the movement, I have noticed just how embedded emotions are into this work. Whether it is a nature-self relationship that results in grief and loss, frustration at the pace at which change is happening or general existentialism about our future, we are guided by our emotions. This work is incredibly human, and these “eco-emotions”<sup>1</sup> are an important part of our identities. As we better understand our human connection to the earth, terms like “eco-anxiety” and “solastalgia” (grief or stress over changes to your home environment – a homesickness for the way the natural environment used to be) hold more weight. I have seen the intensity of these emotions neglected in many climate spaces, and I feel it is important that we tend to them. Some of the strongest initiatives stem from a place of feeling rather than logic, of genuine connection with the Earth and others – these are the advocacy spaces that we need. How do we cultivate a world that makes community action energizing, creative and joyful?

The arts have a unique power to connect, uplift and empower others, and can be a powerful tool for positive community action. They create opportunities to connect with our identity, to process, nurture and express the many emotions around climate change, and to connect with others. The arts can access an authentic, almost primitive self that roots us to what it means to be human – to feel. They ground us to the Earth, ourselves and each other in a way that can be used to foster joyful and energizing community action.

In my own life, the arts have acted as an important avenue for self-discovery, love, and expression. The stage has taught me that my voice – however raw and authentic – is valuable, and one that deserves to be shared. It has empowered me to make change, and is something I fall back on when I feel on the verge of burnout. It makes way for passion and joy with grace, and embraces the messiness of humanity that we need to acknowledge in order to create sustainable action.

My journey of finding the connection between the climate movement and art began with Resonance Youth Choir, a social justice youth choir that I, along with other passionate youth, created in 2023. This We’kwampekik/Truro-based group aims to shed light on social justice issues through music, dance, poetry and visual art. Each project revolves around a theme, which is the cause we base our performance around and raise funds for. In the fall of 2024, the theme was climate change. It was so inspiring to see the way a group of youth could access their emotions around climate change and subsequently share them with the world. It connected audience members to the performers and each other, but also the greater cause of climate justice. What was notable about this performance was that it was grounded in joy and appreciation for the nature that surrounds us. While the performers took opportunities to call for action or voice their frustration, they also accessed a positivity and hope that created a space where people wanted to be. This experience opened my eyes to the arts as a valuable form of activism, and sparked a curiosity about how else this unique relationship is being used.

In recent research, I have found various other initiatives that bring people together through the arts and environment. Each finds a unique way to speak up and take action on heavy and important issues, while being rooted in emotions. I encourage readers to seek out these kinds of groups and projects on their own and engage in conversation about the details of these initiatives.

# Mi'kma'ki/Nova Scotia Projects:

- **Banye Art Foundation: Artivism for Climate Justice: *Empowering Young Artists as Climate Advocates*** – a Kijipuktuk/Halifax-based program educating and empowering young artists to become climate justice activists, supporters and advocates through sustainability, art and storytelling workshops.
- **The Deanery Project** – an arts and environment centre in Ketmenipukwek/Ship Harbour on the Eastern Shore that engage in many community action projects.
- **Creative Climate Showcase** – a grant program led by the Nova Scotia Youth Climate Council for youth artists to create and present a piece inspired by climate change and sustainability.

## Beyond:

- **Creating Climate Resilience** - a program in Victoria, B.C. aiming to increase people's emotional resilience through art-based workshops that foster conversation and collaboration.
- **Eco Art Action** - an art collaboration in Manitoba between Youth WITH ART and Manitoba Environmental Youth Network, which introduced high-schoolers to climate issues through art-making.
- **Music Declares Emergency** - an international collective of musicians who take action by speaking up about climate change, and runs the No Music on a Dead Planet Movement (including local members like musician Braden Lam)

Art is a connector – of people, of emotions, of the Earth. It doesn't limit itself to one kind of person, and can be used as a tool to empower others and inspire community action. We must challenge the bounds of what is considered activism, and include conversation, storytelling and the arts as a way to nurture our emotions and create meaningful change. We have the power to transform the narrative of climate change and action to one that is energizing, joyful and authentic. Let us work towards a future that is nurturing, creative and *human*.

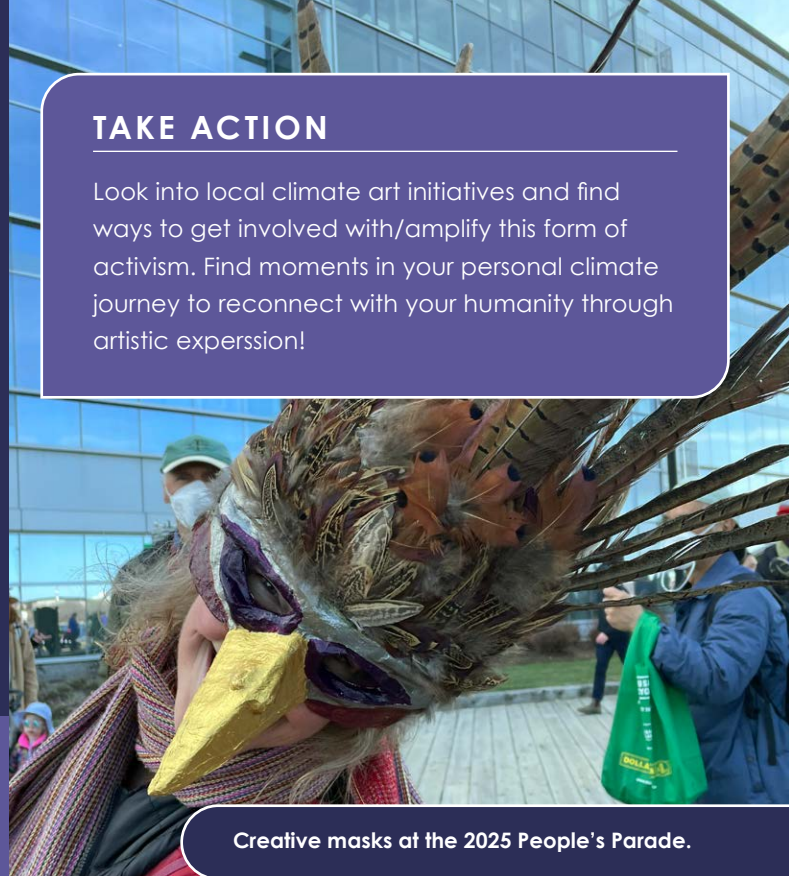
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**Sappho** (she/her) is currently studying Community Development and Music at Acadia University. She loves playing piano, climbing trees and spending time with her dog, Hazel.

## TAKE ACTION

Look into local climate art initiatives and find ways to get involved with/amplify this form of activism. Find moments in your personal climate journey to reconnect with your humanity through artistic expression!



Creative masks at the 2025 People's Parade.



Community members using felt to create environment-focused art at North Grove.



A group of children creating art during a community event at Glen Garden.

# The Government is Letting Nature Down.

## COMMUNITIES ARE STEPPING UP.

by **LINDSAY LEE** /// EAC Staff

Despite strong public support (and its own legislation), the Houston government is neglecting the province's **legal commitments** to protect at least 20 per cent of Nova Scotia's lands and waters by 2030. In the absence of government leadership, a growing number of people are coming together to protect wild spaces in the communities they call home.

### Nature can't wait

Nature is disappearing at an unprecedented rate, with **species going extinct 1,000 times faster now than in pre-human times**. Protected areas are the cornerstone of a healthy environment, but the government's progress in Nova Scotia has been glacial. At the time of writing, the government hasn't added any new protected areas since December 2023. Clearly, the traditional top-down approach isn't working.

### Local insights, lasting impact

Community-proposed protected areas are different; they're driven by local knowledge, connection and creativity, not politics.

This local knowledge includes a strong understanding of a site's ecological benefits, often observed or documented over many years. These insights can help fill important information gaps or even disprove government and industry assertions.

Citizen science is a newer activism tool, but it's expanding rapidly, says Rob Bright of **Citizen Science Nova Scotia**. Documenting species at risk or stands of old growth forest empowers people who care about nature to make a real difference, "thereby protecting different species at risk and the habitats they need to survive."

Concerned citizens set up Last Hope Camp near **Beals Brook** in 2021, after local residents objected to a forestry company cutting a site important to wildlife. The Department of Natural Resources **said they had reviewed the site twice** and found no species at risk, but citizen scientists documented 15 occurrences of species at risk lichens. The mandatory buffers around those lichens put 60 per cent of the site off-limits to forestry and bolstered the case for legal protection. The volunteers camped at the site for 203 days in order to protect it while they compiled this data.

### Buying back the Mersey

The 2012 grassroots "Buy Back the Mersey" campaign spurred the provincial government to **purchase over 28,000 acres of land** from the insolvent Bowater Mersey forestry company. While there's still much work to do, this offered unprecedented opportunities for conservation and resulted in numerous new protected areas.

One outstanding former Bowater Mersey site that remains unprotected is the **proposed Ingram River Wilderness Area**. The St. Margaret's Bay Stewardship Association has been championing the area for over 10 years, documenting a staggering **17 species at risk and an additional 72 species of conservation concern**.

Local advocacy garnered support from 50 organizations, including the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq and the Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia.

Together, they secured legal protection for 25 per cent of the site (as **Island Lake Wilderness Area**). Now, they need public support to save the rest of the site — including the **oldest known forest in the Maritimes** — from being cut.

### Community, creativity and conservation

The Save Our Old Forests Association (SOOF) is campaigning for important sites, including the proposed **Goldsmith Lake Wilderness Area**.

The group's motto is "Do what you love doing to help save old forests." This approach has inspired "musicians, artists, bakers, crafters, dancers and so many more to bring their talents and passions forward to help save old forests," explained Rob Bright.

## TAKE ACTION

Interested in joining an existing campaign in your community, but don't know where to start? Email Lindsay at [lindsay.lee@ecologyaction.ca](mailto:lindsay.lee@ecologyaction.ca).

No matter where you live in the province, you can help by contacting your MLA. Let them know that you are counting on them to support more protected areas in Nova Scotia and engage meaningfully with communities.



**The Proposed Goldsmith Lake Wilderness Area.**  
PHOTO: Nina Newington



**Activists gather in the proposed Chain Lakes Wilderness Area.**  
PHOTO: Blomidon Naturalists Society

Community-building events included their free Soup Sundays, which served up over 230 bowls of soup this winter (not including extra helpings).

"We hear again and again at our SOOF Soup Sundays how much it helps to be in a room together, eating, talking, learning, laughing," added Nina Newington, President of SOOF. "It's all about loving the forest and all the beings that depend on it, including us humans."

## Caring for the planet (and each other)

The Blomidon Naturalists Society (BNS) is advocating for the **proposed Chain Lakes Wilderness Area** in Kings County to be protected. BNS member Celes Davar sees this people-powered approach to protecting ecosystems as a crucial way "governments, non-profit organizations and citizens can collectively invest in and help to protect habitats, sequester carbon and protect biodiversity."

"Stewardship of place transcends political inaction, giving citizens real pathways to protecting habitats," said Celes. He believes that community action also helps "care for community — something Nova Scotians are well-known for."

"Many of us feel helpless as our governments fail to act," said Nina Newington. "Working together to achieve a common goal that will make a difference really helps. While the focus is on the particular area you are trying to protect, in the end, it's about how we all need to work together to protect this Earth that is our only home."

## Nature in the crosshairs

Like much of the province, proposed protected areas in Nova Scotia are still being targeted for resource extraction, including **clearcutting** and a **quarry**.

Community-proposed protected areas aren't a guarantee that the land will be saved, but they are part of a new movement that helps put conservation in the hands of everyday people — and there's no telling what kind of ripple effects that could have.

## Ordinary people, extraordinary impact

These are just a few of the worthy sites that communities have put forward to the provincial government for protection. Across Nova Scotia, local artists, musicians, citizen scientists and small business owners could be the difference between these areas being saved or destroyed.

The future of our province (and our planet) is too important to leave solely in the hands of politicians. We all have a role to play in protecting nature in our communities and our province. From old-growth forests to thriving wetlands, many of the wild features that we love today exist because someone had the foresight and courage to protect them.

The pressures from government and industry are real, but Nova Scotians have managed to save special places from these threats before.

Together, we can do it again.

**Lindsay** (she/her) is the wilderness community outreach officer at the EAC. She's best known through grassroots campaigns to save Owls Head Provincial Park and West Mabou Beach Provincial Park.



Ecology Action Centre

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# Voices of Resistance:

## PHULBARI SPEAKS TO THE WORLD

by **TANIYA YASMIN** /// EAC Volunteer

Phulbari, a region in northwestern Bangladesh, holds the memory of a movement that reshaped national politics and continues to inspire environmental activists across Bangladesh and the world. In 2006, tens of thousands of people marched in protest against a proposed open-pit coal mine backed by the UK-based company GCM Resources. The project threatened to displace innumerable people, ruin farmlands, pollute water sources and destroy a way of life.

Police met the protest with violence. Three young people were killed, more than a hundred were injured and many were left traumatized<sup>1</sup>. Historically, violence has failed to silence people's calls for dignity, and Phulbari was no exception. It backfired, drawing more into the struggle. That resistance, after nine years, brought the mine to a halt in 2014<sup>2</sup>.

The threat, however, persisted. GCM Resources continues to operate on the London Stock Exchange's AIM market. The company has repeatedly extended its mining licence. In fact, GCM renewed its Memorandum of Understanding with PowerChina in December 2024, extending it through December 2025, and continues to present Phulbari as an active project in its investor reports<sup>3</sup>.

The people of Phulbari, however, have not ceded ground and continue to organize protests in resistance. And this resistance is not driven by ideology but by survival. In villages like Borogram, families built homes on empty or abandoned land after being displaced by river erosion elsewhere. They cleared forests, dug irrigation canals, planted rice and vegetables and created a local economy. These are their homes, not temporary settlements. People here may not have "paperwork," but they carry decades of presence and connections in the area. Strip away the land, and you strip away those lives woven into it. In addition, the coal project would dry up the water table, damage nearby rivers, and pollute soil. Nearly all the coal was intended for export, and the people of Phulbari were never meant to benefit<sup>4</sup>. That is why thousands mobilized in 2006 and why they continue to do so today.

Over the years, these actions have been met with heavy repression. Some villagers lost their livelihoods and faced lawsuits or police threats. Authorities followed, harassed and arrested activists. One of the earliest advocates, Nasreen Huq, died in a suspicious accident shortly after organizing public opposition<sup>5</sup>. Despite it all, the movement adapted and pressed forward. Every year on Aug. 26, Phulbari Day is observed with vigils, marches and speeches<sup>6</sup>. It is a promise that will endure as long as the people and their land do.

**Taniya** (she/her) is a physician, child health researcher and an environmental activist. She loves cooking, photo embroidery and talking 24/7 to her twin sister.

### TAKE ACTION

If you care about land and climate justice or Indigenous rights anywhere in the world, then Phulbari's struggle is yours. Connect with activists in similar movements. Share their stories. Write to officials and companies still trying to profit from such excavation projects. Support those on the front lines. Remember: resistance works, but only when we keep showing up, together.

Solidarity is also what keeps the movement ongoing. The people of Phulbari are not alone. Environmental groups in Bangladesh, student organizers, women's networks, Indigenous activists and labour unions have stood with them. Across the world, campaigners have amplified their voices, challenged investors and demanded accountability. This fabric of conscience and solidarity has made it harder for GCM to move forward. This is not just one village resisting one project, but a global consensus of people refusing to let power, exploitation and capitalism disregard them.



PHOTO: Phulbari Solidarity

Phulbari's story is unfinished, and it is not isolated. The fight speaks to a demand for justice that Canadians, too, will recognize—one echoed in Nova Scotia, where Mi'kmaw leaders and allies fought to stop industrial dumping and now work to restore the tidal estuary at Boat Harbour.

Together, these struggles remind us that defending land and water is a collective ongoing work, especially in a world where climate change disregards every border we have drawn.

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# Remembering Sylvia Mangalam



Sylvia (in the green hat) singing with the Raging Grannies.

by **MARLA MACLEOD** /// EAC Staff

On Jan. 24, 2025, we lost Sylvia Mangalam, long time member of the Ecology Action Centre community and fiery spirit, days before her 91st birthday.

She lived a full and varied life. Born in upstate New York, she spent her early years living on a farm. She attended Cornell University and graduated with a masters degree in social anthropology and nutrition. With her husband, she moved from Ithaca, where they were married, to Lahore, Pakistan; then Kentucky; then Ontario; then finally Nova Scotia. She was many things – sheep farmer, poet, cookbook author, activist, mother, grandmother and so much more.

Sylvia was instrumental in the fight against uranium mining in the 1980s. When a uranium company threatened the headwaters of the Avon River, she joined with two other women to found Citizen Action to Protect the Environment. They produced reports and fact sheets about the dangers of uranium exploration, held many public meetings around Nova Scotia, seeded other grassroots organizations and did a tremendous amount of mobilization work. The resulting public outcry from around the province led to the uranium moratorium in 1981.

In the early 2000s, Sylvia was one of the founding members of the EAC's Food Action Committee. She was a staunch supporter of local, sustainable agriculture. She helped support our harvest fests, rallied the Raging Grannies, wrote letters, attended conferences, taught cooking and preserving workshops, opened her home to root cellar tours and more. She greeted every success with enthusiastic



cheers, and every disappointing government announcement with her trademark “harumph”. She lived her values and shared her knowledge broadly. Her backyard was and still is an abundant garden in the heart of Bedford, filled with vegetables, flowers and pear trees, from which she generously shared the harvest.

We carry her spirit with us as we continue to fight the good fight and build the world we want to live in.

**Marla** (she/her) is the EAC's director of operations. She loves helping people untangle complex problems, and when not at the office, she can be found mucking around in her garden, canoeing and exploring Kijipuktuk/Halifax by bike.

Cloudy skies over the Halifax Commons.

PHOTOS: Simon Ryder-Burbidge



Community hike near Peggy's Cove.



# Morality and the Loss of the Village

by LIS LANDRY /// EAC Staff

When I lived in Montreal, I would meet up with my friend Katie once or twice a month for a drink. She was finishing her PhD in nursing and I was, much less virtuously, completing a masters of analytic philosophy. We'd meet in dimly lit bars and talk about medical ethics, politics, our climate grief and all the other petty and precious things that clutter ordinary life. Sometimes it was only Katie and me. Other times, a blithe crowd would gather around us. In my fondest memories of that city, I am sunk into a vinyl booth, warm with drink, listening to their chatter like a song. I never really found my place in Montreal, but I feel that I brushed up against it in those moments.

Unfortunately, it didn't last. By the time I finished my degree, we all scarcely saw each other. When we did pull a group together, most of our time was spent catching up on each other's lives instead of being a part of them. Katie remains a dear friend, but the space between our meetings grew and grew. Soon after, I left Montreal, heavy with the weight of my own loneliness.

This is a familiar feeling for many in my generation. In 1986, nearly half of Canadians reported seeing their friends daily. Now, it's about one in five.<sup>1</sup> Our informal ties are weaker too; we see less of our neighbours, coworkers, baristas and bankers. Many of my friends are becoming parents today with little support from their communities. Everywhere I look, I see people suffering from the loss of "the village".

Clearly, isolation hurts us. But as an EACer, I'm also concerned that it undermines our ability to take collective action. We're facing some serious, compounding problems in the world right now, like climate change, inequity and avarice. It's tempting for me to merely blame the powerful people that let these problems happen, but I know that we will not heal this wound by simply deploring the knife that caused it. Instead, we must work together to protect each other and mend the world. To do this, I think we need to find our village.

# How do you build a village?

I found myself turning to a philosophical framework called the ethics of care while searching for an answer to this question. It's an approach to ethics that was developed by feminist thinkers in the late 20th century as a critique of how Western philosophy tends to imagine morality.

Western moral theory has long been shaped by the ideals of liberal individualism, the belief that society is made up of independent, self-governing individuals motivated by reason and self-interest. According to this view, the individual exists before the group; relationships and cooperation are secondary, formed only when they serve self-interested goals. Morality, then, is about setting rules for how these separate individuals can treat one another justly, and a "good person" is one who rises above their personal ties and emotions to apply universal, impartial principles.

This moral individualism gives us a tidy view of moral life, but it's got some big problems. For one, it tends to embed misogyny into moral thought. By overemphasizing dispassionate rationality, moral individualism treats virtues often associated with femininity (like care, empathy and interdependence) as private concerns rather than moral achievements. It can even portray women as inherently morally defective, since we have historically been seen as "less rational" than men.

It also rests on a false assumption. Moral individualism depends on the idea that humans spring into existence with their identities essentially fully formed, requiring no nurturing from (or co-creation with) those around them. Not so. Every autonomous adult was once a dependent child, and we all remain dependent on each other in various ways throughout life. Our capacity for rational action was taught to us and protected by others. Crucially, we would not have any "self-interest" to pursue if it were not for our caregivers, who took a shared interest in our well-being. As care ethicist Virginia Held writes, it can be useful to imagine ourselves as liberal individuals in some contexts but "we should not lose sight of ... the need for caring relations to undergird or surround such constructions".<sup>2</sup> A complete moral philosophy must have room for care just as well as autonomy to address "both the more immediate and the more distant human relations [required] to develop morally acceptable societies".<sup>3</sup>

Imagine visiting a grieving friend whose apartment has fallen into disarray. Are you morally obliged to help clean it? Most individualist theories would say no: the act is permissible, even admirable, but not required. They hold that you owe your friend no more than a stranger in the same position. Care ethics resists this framing, rejecting the idea that moral life consists of isolated duties between independent agents. Your friend's grief, and your awareness of it, are part of an ongoing relationship; they are facts that have moral relevance in themselves. The real question, then, is not "do I have an obligation to help?" but "what would a caring and attentive response look like in this context?"

So, care ethicists and village-builders share a common adversary: an individualism that erodes the sense of mutual responsibility needed for community. Perhaps, we can answer our village-building question by deploying an ethics of care.

# Three ways to build a village, according to the ethics of care

## ① IMAGINE CARE AS BOTH A VALUE AND A PRACTICE

Someone who values care makes a standing commitment to the importance of caring relations. This makes relationships morally salient and creates attentiveness to the needs within them. That attentiveness, in turn, motivates a practice of care: the competent, proportional ways the carer responds. As village-builders, we might begin by recognizing care as one of our values and committing to the moral importance of a caring community. We can ask: In what ways does my village need me? How can I respond to that need with caring practice?

## ② LET GO OF TRANSACTIONAL EXPECTATIONS

Liberal individualism says humans act mainly to pursue personal desires. Since achieving these goals often requires collaboration, people must bargain: if you help me, I'll owe you. This creates a transactional expectation in our relationships and implies that those who need more help owe more debt. Care ethics rejects this by seeing caring cooperation as a natural part of interacting as interdependent beings. The next step, then, is to trade transactional expectations for shared interests: when I care for you, I take on your interests as my own, without debt.

## ③ BECOME A VILLAGER

Community is socially constructed; it exists through how we act and relate. If our communities no longer feel like villages, we should change how we construct them. As Virginia Held observes, when people accept individualism as human nature, they behave as if it were true. This connection between belief and behaviour gives us an important tool: if we accept interconnection and interdependence as part of who we are, we'll be better positioned to make those needed changes.

**To become villagers, we must believe in the village.**

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Lis (she/her) is a recovering analytic philosopher who works on the EAC's fundraising team.

# Suzuki Fears It's "Too Late" to Change Current Climate Trajectory – But the Fight is Not Over

by **KERRI-ANNE RITCHIE** /// EAC Volunteer

Prominent environmental advocate David Suzuki recently issued a distressful, but well-founded, stance on the current state of climate change. In an interview with iPolitics this July Suzuki discussed Canadian political discourse impacting environmental action. Noting that Mark Carney, the newly appointed Prime Minister, held a climate finance post at the UN before pursuing politics, Suzuki indicated that being very well-informed on climate change does not necessarily coincide with action. The major political focus remains on economic growth, a "creed of cancer" that is not sustainable in a finite world. This prioritization of the economy above the very atmosphere that gives us air to breathe spurred Suzuki to state that, when it comes to avoiding at least some level of catastrophic global heating, "it's too late".

While Suzuki assures us that there are solutions available to slow and eventually cap global heating, he justifies his concern for public and political apathy regarding our current climate by referencing Johan Rockström's proposed planetary boundaries. These are boundaries which we cannot surpass in order to maintain a safe operating space for humanity, including climate change, biosphere integrity, land-system change, freshwater use, biogeochemical flows, ocean acidification, stratospheric ozone depletion, atmospheric aerosol loading, and the introduction of novel entities (such as new chemicals and plastics). Of these planetary boundaries, we have only dealt with one – the ozone layer. Conversely, we have crossed the threshold point of six other boundaries since they were first defined in 2009, and this year, we breached the seventh – ocean acidification.

The remaining boundary, atmospheric aerosol loading, refers to the amount of solid or liquid particles suspended in the air. While some aerosols are released by natural sources, a significant amount is produced by anthropogenic (human-driven) activities such as the burning of fossil fuels. Canadian industry and government are actively promoting this process with the creation of more pipelines and new coal mines. Additionally, the U.S. government has overturned the majority of its climate policies, cut incentives for clean energy and is intensifying promotion of, and subsidies for, gas, oil and coal. We must, therefore, take it upon ourselves to prioritize the shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources.

Scientists overwhelmingly agree that global temperature should not exceed pre-industrial levels by 1.5°C, but we are on our way to a more than 3°C rise by the end of this century. This could trigger feedback loops and generate domino-effects that maintain unstable environments for decades or potentially centuries, even if temperatures fall back below the 1.5°C threshold.

Despite this, Suzuki has not given up hope, nor should we. Reducing the intensity of global warming to prevent its increasingly adverse effects relies on a wide-scale collaborative effort from society to make more informed decisions. But what can we simultaneously achieve on a more local scale? While advocating in the political sphere is always an important and impactful way to spark change, these changes tend to be incremental. What Suzuki is calling for is a revolution. He notes that many efforts in the environmental movement have been caught up in assuming politicians will make the right decisions. He suggests that, rather than relying primarily on forcing change through political systems and waiting for consequential efforts, communities must take action into their own hands.

We are already experiencing many repercussions of the climate crisis, including extreme weather events, floods, droughts and increasingly severe wildfires. As these emergencies heighten, governments will likely be unable to respond on the scale or with the speed required. In light of this fact, Suzuki urges local communities to "shift our priorities, hunker down and actualize

Youth march through the streets of Kijipuktuk/Halifax at the 2024 climate strike. PHOTOS: Sara Farias



*“Let's fight like mad to be as resilient as we can in the face of what's coming.”*

## TAKE ACTION

Find ways that you can plug into the climate movement. Get together with your community to see how you can support one another and create climate resilience.

them.” He suggests connecting with our neighbourhood to find out who has extra provisions, where water is available and who's going to need help in an emergency – such as those with mobility issues. Lytton, B.C. is a great example of this kind of community resilience. Following a devastating wildfire in 2021, the town has been focusing on rebuilding. Their plan includes constructing a Community Hub, a safe space for residents that will host community events and provide various services. It will be net-zero and have climate resilience built in, with a swimming pool that can double as a water reservoir when needed.

While we no longer avoid a certain amount of runaway global heating and the impacts it will have on our lives, this does not mean the fight is over. The goal is for each community to become as self-reliant and self-sufficient as possible. This, however, does not mean acting alone as it truly takes a village. Be a good neighbour and inform others about the threats associated with climate change, then create a plan. Rally together and lean on each other for help and guidance. No matter what differences we may have, we all call this planet home. Protecting the Earth and our communities is what matters most.

Quoting the Canadian climate change champion himself: “Let's fight like mad to be as resilient as we can in the face of what's coming.”



2023 Kijipuktuk/Halifax climate strike.

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**Kerri-Anne** (she/her) is a graduate of Laurentian University's Zoology program. Residing in Ontario, she currently works developing AI technologies remotely, while volunteering with local wildlife organizations and dreaming of caring for exotic wildlife.

# Action is our Middle Name

## MARINE

After 16 months of cumulative work to establish the Local Catch Canada, our first in-person retreat was held in April in Vancouver. The Local Catch Canada is hosted by the EAC and is a growing, cross-country network of harvesters Indigenous and non-Indigenous, seafood businesses, non-profits and researchers working to build a more equitable, community-based seafood system. The retreat was a resounding success and brought together approximately 40 seafood harvesters and allies representing all three coasts and freshwater lakes to engage in learning, knowledge sharing and practical discussions about the seafood industry in Canada and Indigenous Nations and Territories.

With our partners at SeaChoice, we released our Conscious Avoidance report after months of analysis on major Canadian retailer's seafood sourcing practices. We found that even the most robust policies remain limited in scope, many "indirect" seafood products such as pet food, fish oil and prepared meals are not included in sourcing policies, and most are failing to address human rights issues within their seafood supply chains. To spur change, we launched a campaign encouraging our followers to write directly to retailers, which has resulted in over 1,600 emails sent urging retailers to act!

Our eelgrass mapping and monitoring work has been in full swing this summer. We have conducted nearly 20 surveys and offered kayak survey training to more than a dozen citizen scientist volunteers ranging from Pugwash to Canso to St. Margaret's Bay, Mahone Bay and Southwest Nova.



PHOTO: Nick Hawkins

## TRANSPORTATION

The Transportation Team continued with the Pop-Up Bike Hub this summer, taking the trailer across Nova Scotia and visiting 20 communities. We successfully distributed 63 safe cycling accessories and fixed 516 bikes! The PUBH Mini was busy commuting across the HRM by e-bike, visiting 10 communities and repairing 276 bikes.

Through the Welcoming Wheels program, we gave away 34 bikes during the Kids Gifting Sessions. Three people participated in the Earn-A-Bike program, volunteering and helping fix bikes through our repair nights. The Bike Buddies program, where newcomers are paired with experienced cyclists, had 36 people participate as mentors and mentees.

The Local Activations project continued to support communities in identifying and eventually implementing projects that support active and sustainable transportation. Currently, the project is collaborating with the towns of New Glasgow and Truro, Eskasoni First Nation and the community of Spryfield.

We held our annual IWALK event where schools and youth groups across Nova Scotia participate in walks to/at school. This year we had over 8,500 students participate. As well, we held a Youth Mobility Audit with the Wasoqopa'q First Nation Youth Centre.

A Walk-shop was co-developed and led in partnership with Parachute and other local groups in Glace Bay, highlighting the active transportation features in their community with key stakeholders and decision makers.

Our team is collaborating with N.S. Walks on a series of mobility audits led by community walking groups across the province, and building a community of practice to support community walk leaders in bringing their findings to decision-makers.



## FOOD

The Food Team has seen a lot of change and evolution over the past months. In April, Common Roots Urban Farm came under the wings of the EAC. Both farm sites were able to re-open in the spring and welcome everyone back into the gardens! This season, 240 allotment plots were gardened, harvesting everything from edible flowers to African eggplants. Our two market gardens produced hundreds of pounds of vegetables to share with households struggling to afford fresh or culturally relevant produce. We wrapped up with the much-beloved annual Harvest Hootenanny and Pumpkin Smash, where hundreds of guests gathered to press cider, plant garlic and share a meal together in celebration of another growing season.

On the Food Team, staff have been dedicated to the advancement and coordination of the Halifax Food Council (HFC), through partnership with the HRM and other core partners. In the fall, staff wrapped up the Emergency Food Stormkit project and distributed 1500 kits containing local, shelf-stable foods to international students and community partners. The HFC ran its second year of Community Food Grants, this year adding on a Garden Grant stream, funding 14 grassroots, community food initiatives in the HRM. In June, staff also released the Growing at Home report, that highlights recent food system data in the province, including a stagnant local food consumption data, and advocated for support for struggling producers.

Through many partnerships and collaborations, staff are continuing to advance community food advocacy and programs to improve our food system!



PHOTO: Nicola Nemy



## BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The Built Environment Team focused much of its work on advocating for stronger environmental protections in the HRM's Regional Plan. We pushed for the full inclusion of the Halifax Green Network Plan and for firm 30-metre buffers around coasts, wetlands, and watercourses, which are still at risk of being weakened through development agreements. We also urged Council to push back against dramatic provincial overreach and have continued to submit letters, fact sheets and briefings to officials and the public to ensure these protections are carried into the next draft.

At the same time, we strengthened Our HRM Alliance, now made up of 64 coalition members - CAPE N.S. and Friends of First Lake Society both joining us in the last few months! We hosted a strategy workshop to help members prepare for Regional Plan changes and, for the first time, began planning how to engage with the provincial government. Sixteen Alliance members and volunteers spoke at the Regional Plan hearing in support of the 30-metre buffers and other environmental safeguards.

Beyond policy advocacy, we raised awareness of threats from Special Planning Areas at Sandy Lake and Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes through public explainers, social media and our Hike the Greenbelt program. Despite challenges from a temporary hiking ban, we adapted our events and continued to connect diverse communities to these landscapes while building momentum for a resilient Halifax Greenbelt.



PHOTO: Irwin Barrett



PHOTO: Simon Ryder Burbidge

## WILDERNESS

The Wilderness Team continues working hard to support environmental action—and activists—when it matters most. As communities grappled with issues like clear-cutting, glyphosate spraying, uranium mining and inappropriate developments, we called out unfairness, showed up for one another and highlighted better solutions.

We shared our love for the natural world through guided hikes at Sandy Lake Regional Park, World Environment Day in Kentville and the third annual Wetlands Appreciation Week—an event we hosted together with over a dozen organizations across the province.

We partnered on Bird Week Halifax to help bring guided bird walks to every district of the HRM, so councillors and citizens could learn about birds in their neighbourhoods and what they need to thrive.

Our staff helped amplify important issues in the media, tackling suburban sprawl, the Northern Pulp clean-up, the Environmental Assessment process and the provincial government undermining democracy. We continued to raise awareness about mining issues in Nova Scotia, including concerns about uranium mining, the Goldboro gold mine approval and the mining approval process itself.

We strived to deliver the information Nova Scotians need to advocate for nature and communities, including resources on landowners' rights, wildfires, high production forestry and changes to the environmental assessment process, as well as a webinar on mining critical minerals in Nova Scotia. We supported grassroots allies, including at community-led meetings about Dartmouth Cove, Eisner Cove Wetland, the proposed Ingram River Wilderness Area and uranium mining.

PHOTO: Patrice Bouchard



## COASTAL & WATER

The Coastal and Water Team became part of the second Peregrine Accelerator for Conservation Impact cohort in early 2025. The program's focus is to develop innovative conservation solutions to support ecological and human health in the North Atlantic Transboundary Landscape. The Team held a week-long retreat in P.E.I. along with the seven other organizations in the cohort to launch the program. Through this program, the Coastal and Water Team is developing a community based coastal monitoring tool.

In June, the Team attended the Coastal Zone Canada Conference in P.E.I. where we co-hosted a two-part workshop on coastal access with Dr. Patricia Manuel (Dalhousie School of Planning, ret.), Dr. Hannah Harrison (Dalhousie Marine Affairs Program), Mike Kofahl (ECELaw), Samuel Eisner (Lawyer) and Bryson Guptill of The Island Walk P.E.I. The workshop facilitated coastal access conversations with participants and aims to set urgent research and action priorities for coastal access.

Earlier in the summer, the EAC partnered with the Halifax municipality and TransCoastal Adaptations at Saint Mary's University to launch Living Lakeshores, a new project focused on restoring and protecting freshwater shorelines. The initiative will support community-led restoration using nature-based approaches and increase public understanding of shoreline resilience. As part of the project, residents were offered free shoreline naturalization training, helping to build climate-adapted, ecologically healthy lakefronts across the region.

The Coastal Team was invited to the iconic Thinkers Lodge National Historic Site in Pugwash to join an international workshop on coastal adaptation. The meeting focused on identifying key challenges, priorities and solutions for coastal communities as they face the challenges of adapting to an ever-changing climate. The Team was able to share important lessons and experiences from Nova Scotia's failure to adopt the Coastal Protection Act.

PHOTO: Jimmie Pederson



## ENERGY & CLIMATE

From farmers' markets to Parliament Hill, our Energy Team has been busy making the case for a clean, affordable and just energy future. We've connected with community champions and decision-makers across Nova Scotia and Canada to discuss big-picture solutions like East-West transmission lines and their nation building potential. With the launch of the Atlantic Offshore Wind Coalition, we're advancing offshore wind as a job creator and grid decarbonizer, while stressing the need for responsible development.

We've also been clear about what we don't want in Nova Scotia. Our No More B.S. campaign pushed back against uranium mining, fracking, biomass and nuclear, while our Powerlines vs. Pipelines campaign emphasized people-powered, Indigenous-led solutions.

A highlight was the Day of Electrification, where electric vehicle (EV) adopters and providers from across the country shared lessons. We also welcomed our new Teens for Climate group to their first in-person meeting.

We launched two key initiatives: Building Nova Scotia's Green Workforce and the Mi'kmaw Workers in Energy Efficiency video series, both sparking lively conversations about building a strong, sustainable workforce. Learn more at: [ecologyaction.ca/justtransition](https://ecologyaction.ca/justtransition).

Through our Faith in Motion pilot, 25 faith buildings are exploring EV charging in their parking lots. Pivoting to in-person Better Building Speaker events increased attendance 1000 per cent and motivated participants to take direct actions.

On energy poverty, we shifted gears from provincial advocacy to grassroots engagement. The EAC's Petition Action Team distributed postcards across Halifax, Dartmouth and Spryfield, helping residents share stories and demand fair, affordable energy. By keeping people front and center, we're turning awareness into collective action.



PHOTO: Istock



# The Seasonal Gourmet

by **DARA CARR** /// EAC Volunteer

## Annapolis Valley Apple Crisp

(Gluten-free, with vegan option)

Apples are one of the most prominent local crops produced here in Mi'kma'ki/Nova Scotia. Growing up in Wolfville in the Annapolis Valley, apples were especially central to our local agriculture and culture; in June, there was the Apple Blossom festival to celebrate, and come autumn, the highly-anticipated apple harvest, including trips to U-pick apple orchards. The local traditions surrounding apples provided a reminder of the significance of local produce, fostered a sense of community and served as a connection to the changing seasons of the land we live on. While there are a wide variety of apple-based dishes that incorporate this local fruit (including apple cider, pie, sauces, and beyond), one of my favourites has always been my mother's apple crisp. While simple and easy to whip together, this dish never fails to please a crowd, and is now a comforting autumn staple in my own kitchen.



### SUBSTITUTIONS

Sub regular flour and oats if you don't need the recipe to be gluten-free. For a dairy-free/vegan option, simply sub a vegan butter (dairy-free butters intended for baking, usually coming in stick form, are a better option than vegan margarines). Sub demerara sugar for both the filling and topping if you wish to avoid refined sugar, as it still has the deep, molasses flavour that is crucial to this recipe.

### INGREDIENTS

**FILLING** (For 8x8 or 9x9 pan)

**3 lb. / 8-9 cups** sliced, peeled tart apples

**1/4 cup** granulated or demerara sugar

### TOPPING

**1 cup** gluten-free flour

**1 cup** gluten-free rolled oats (large flake if available)

**1/3 cup** packed brown sugar (dark brown or demerara)

**1/2 tsp** cinnamon (or more to taste)

**1/2 cup** butter, melted (vegan option: sub dairy-free butter)

### DIRECTIONS

- 1 Heat oven to 375°F (190°C).
- 2 In an 8x8 or 9x9 square baking dish, add sliced apples and sugar. Toss to combine, and spread evenly so that the top is level.
- 3 **TOPPING:** In a medium or large mixing bowl, add flour, oats, brown sugar, and cinnamon. Mix together with a large spoon. Drizzle with melted butter, and toss with a fork until combined. Sprinkle topping evenly over apples.
- 4 Bake in oven for about 45 minutes, or until the topping is crisp and golden and the filling is tender and bubbly. Remove from oven and let cool for 30 minutes.
- 5 Serve with regular or dairy-free whipped cream or vanilla ice cream.

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## VOLUNTEER WITH THE ECOLOGY ACTION CENTRE!



Volunteers are vital to the work of the EAC. Whether it's helping with an event, joining a committee, taking part in a project or more, our volunteer mailing list is the best way to learn about upcoming volunteer opportunities.

Visit [ecologyaction.ca/volunteer](https://ecologyaction.ca/volunteer) to learn more!



Thanks to the EAC community, **we raised over \$10,000** through the EAC Hike-A-Thon this year! With over 34 participants hiking throughout Nova Scotia, this was an incredible event to connect with like-minded people and appreciate our beautiful province.

Visit [ecologyaction.ca/hike-a-thon](https://ecologyaction.ca/hike-a-thon) to be the first to know when EAC Hike-A-Thon 2026 launches.

**Want to know what it feels like to join  
thousands of other voices for change?**

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

### **How?**

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