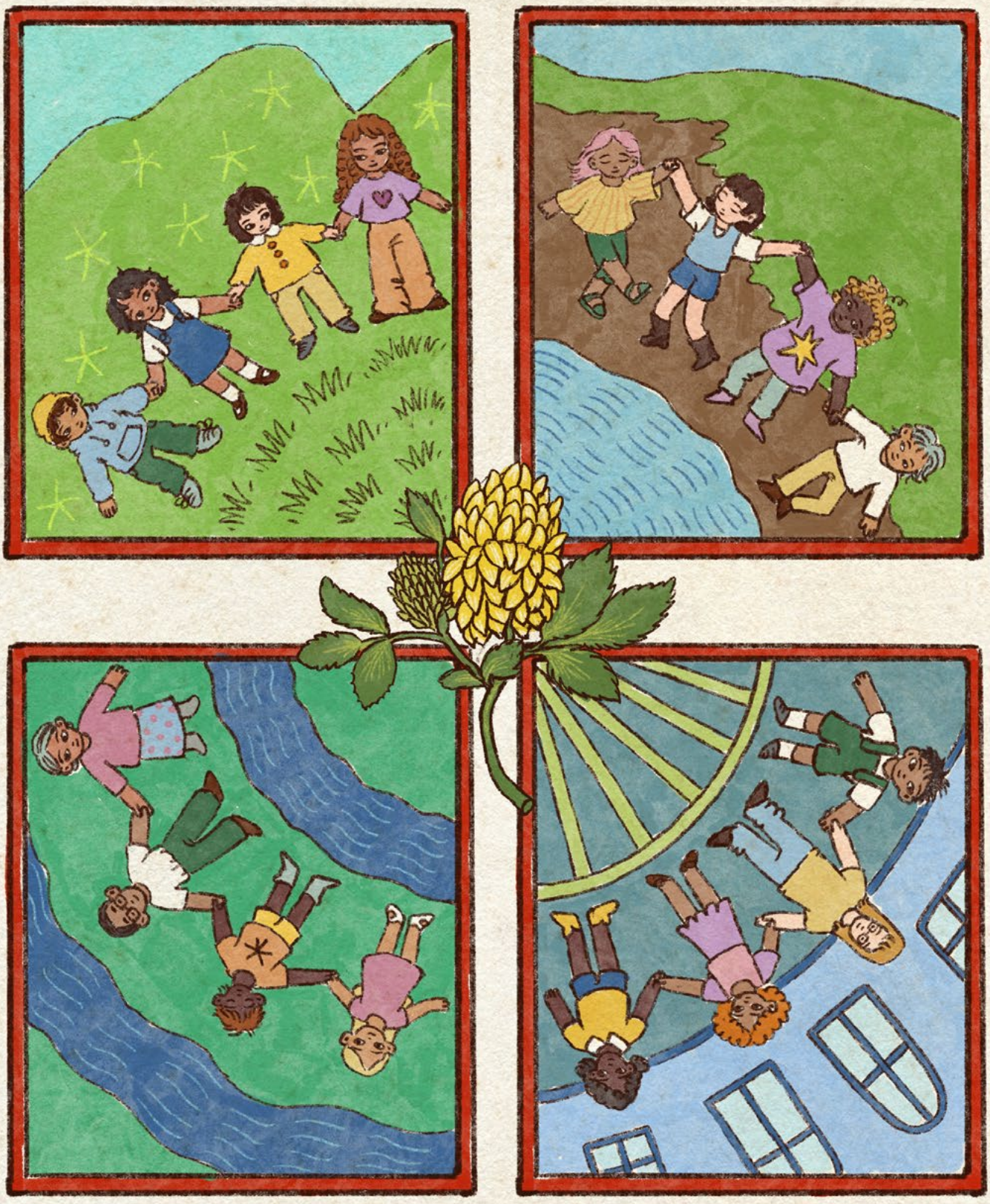
Ecology & Action

SPRING 2026



VOL. 44 NO. 1

PM 4005 0204 | ISSN 2369-5943

A publication of Ecology Action Centre

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Funded by the Government of Canada | Canada

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

In Mi'kma'ki and beyond, our social and environmental movements are vitally needed. Just a few months into 2026, this is clearer than ever – Nova Scotians face ongoing threats to protected wilderness spaces, energy and food costs, still-soaring housing prices and heavy polluters like fracking and mining touted as solutions to our province's every woe. But we're not backing down. From coast to coast, community members continue to step up and organize for a sustainable, thriving future.

This issue celebrates courageous, empowered movement work happening today. It also profiles earlier movements whose challenges and victories we can learn from. While organizing and activism have never been easy, the good news is that we don't have to figure it all out on our own. When we look at issues "long and deep" – long as in *What parts of movement history could provide insight on this issue?* and deep as in *What kinds of approaches have had results across many movements?* – we gain surprising strategies and fresh inspiration.

Some of the stories you'll read here are rooted in Mi'kma'ki, like the fight to protect Sandy Lake and Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes, the movement to clean up toxic paper mill effluent in A'Se'K (Boat Harbour) and the Upper Hammonds Plains Community Land Trust created by descendants of Black settlers. Other stories highlight grassroots movements around the world, including Indigenous land defense and efforts to secure legal personhood for rivers, trees and other elements of nature. Still others explore how creativity itself can propel us toward a better future, as seen in solarpunk writing and even the radical side of electronic dance music.

The possibilities for this issue were endless. We wanted to go as broad and inclusive as possible, reflecting that collective survival takes a diversity of individuals, groups and tactics. As we've said before, our power to change the path we're on doesn't lie with any one person – it lies in relationships, in listening and collaboration. Our power flows from being in movement together.

Solarpunk:
AN EGALITARIAN, ARTISTIC MOVEMENT TOWARD A SUSTAINABLE WORLD

Utopian artwork; attribution ShareAlike 4.0. International. Berlin. CC BY-SA 4.0.
Lino Zeddies & Aerroscape

by **MARY WOODBURY** /// EAC Volunteer

In May 2008, an anonymous author made a blog post titled "From Steampunk to Solarpunk[1]," suggesting a new literary genre inspired by steampunk. The difference between the two genres is that steampunk imagined alternative worlds based on Victorian oil-based technologies, whereas solarpunk moved past fossil fuels and blazed the trail towards a more pragmatic, cheaper and cleaner economy.

In the 2010s, the concept of solarpunk exploded, thanks in part to visual artist Olivia Louise, who posted solarpunk art on Tumblr in 2014.[2] She had created Art Nouveau themes in fashion, architecture and urban settings that integrated green ideas and a bright aesthetic. Researcher Adam Flynn further helped define the movement for a science fiction initiative called Project Hieroglyph, founded by author Neal Stephenson. Flynn wrote Solarpunk: Notes toward a manifesto that same year.[3]

Mary Woodbury (she/her) is a localization specialist, author, hiker, lover of nature, and curator of ecological fiction.

It was during the mid-2010s when I first heard the term "solarpunk," but my introduction came by way of a Portuguese anthology titled "Solarpunk: Histórias ecológicas e fantásticas em um mundo sustentável," edited by Gerson Lodi-Ribeiro and originally published in 2012 by Editora Draco in São Paulo, Brazil. I'd been curating a website (Dragonfly.eco), which explores world ecofiction, always looking for intriguing interviews. At that time, the anthology was in the process of being translated to English by World Weaver Press, at which one of my literary colleagues, Sarena Ulibarri, was editor-in-chief. She put me in touch with the translator, Fábio Fernandes, and we chatted about solarpunk.

I'd also interviewed Adam Flynn, who said, "If cyberpunk was 'Here is this future that we see coming and we don't like it,' and steampunk is 'Here's yesterday's future that we wish we had,' then solarpunk might be 'Here's a future that we want and we might actually be able to get.'"[4]

Solarpunk evolves

Throughout the past decade, solarpunk emerged as a popular movement and ideology. I'm most familiar with literary solarpunk, but

the genre's concept involves egalitarian, diverse, holistic perspectives, which include technology, fashion, art, architecture, games, renewable energy, urban planning and more. In the past several years, I've had the opportunity to interview many solarpunk authors.

Publishers, authors and editors such as Sarena Ulibarri, Sheree Renée Thomas, Oghenechovwe Donald Ekpeki, Zelda Knight, Marissa van Uden, Susan Kaye Quinn, BrightFlame, Nina Munteanu, Lynn Hutchinson Lee, Tory Stephens (Creative Manager at Grist), Renan Bernardo, Solarpunk Magazine editor Justine Norton-Kertson, E.G. Condé, and Aleksandar Nedeljkovic, are just some artists whom I've chatted with – but that's just the tip of the iceberg. Now, a decade or more after its origins, here's what some of these artists are saying about solarpunk:

"Solarpunk is a political form of speculative art and activism that imagines survivable futures grounded in resilience and the role of communities instead of states or companies to define progress. It focuses on collective action and encompasses material realities like food, healthcare, housing, and migration as some of its central axes. It is a way of imagining better forms of coexistence, be they human or non-human, where hope is inseparable from action and technology inextricable from responsible use and communal control. Global South perspectives and voices are of extreme importance when defining the genre, as it is the part of the world most affected by the consequences of harsh climate and mass migration. Hence, Global South narratives and stories must be central rather than merely representational." -Renan Bernardo, author of Different Kinds of Defiance

"Solarpunk stories give us a glimpse of the world we'd have if we quit corporations and stopped isolating humans from nature – an Earth where life is cherished more than logos. For me, the best solarpunk doesn't make me feel hopeful; it makes me feel angry. It reminds me we're in the middle of the greatest heist in Earth's history, watching this other future being stolen, and we don't have to let them get away with it." - Marissa van Uden, editor-in-chief of Violet Lichen Books and series editor of the Eco: The Year's Best Speculative Ecofiction annual anthology

I asked Justine Norton-Kertson, co-editor-in-chief of Solarpunk Magazine, "What is solarpunk?" They answered, "A good user-friendly definition that I really like to use, which is taken from one of solarpunk's founding authors and strategists – Jay Springett – is that solarpunk is a movement in art, literature, fashion, architecture, and activism that seeks to embody and answer the question, 'What does a sustainable world look like, and can we get there ?'"

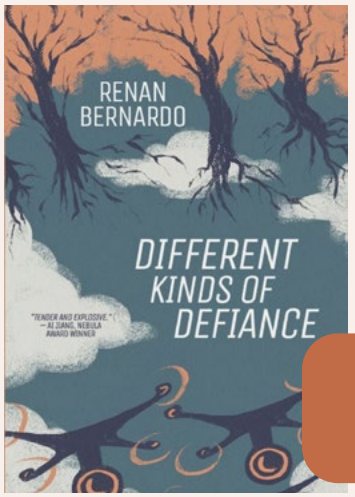
I talked with the editors of Africa Risen, and when I asked about a rise in fiction about biodiversity and the environment, as more African writers find the avenues to address ecofiction topics, Zelda Knight replied that there is a movement towards branding climate and science fiction with something new and "writing more positive futurism like solarpunk."[5]

"Solarpunk is a movement, a genre, and a vibe to create futures where all beings thrive. Yet this pert answer doesn't do justice to solarpunk. Solarpunk is a verb. It is the act of creating futures where all beings thrive. Writing (fiction or nonfiction) expands our notion of what is possible and documents solarpunk in action. This inspires the act of creating those futures: to solarpunk." - BrightFlame, author of The Working and contributor to solarpunk articles and anthologies

Jay Springett, mentioned above, quoted Kendra Pierre-Louis at Yes! Magazine, who said, "Once upon a time, some humans told a story about their relationship to the Earth, and they used it to build a world that was beautiful but flawed. Over time, people realized that was the wrong story, and they constructed a new one, one that said they could live in harmony with their environment. And they used the pieces of their old story to help construct their new one."[6]

TAKE ACTION

Find a solarpunk niche, such as energy, art, literature, gaming or fashion: join up, learn and grow. The DIY options are: compost, recycle, rewild your yard, repurpose things and more. Bigger steps: go solar, even partially; make an EV your next car purchase; and vote for leaders who are part of the clean energy movement.



Berlin Friedrichstraße
Utopia 2048
Dante Luiz

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Critical Green Space in HRM:

SANDY LAKE AND BLUE MOUNTAIN - BIRCH COVE LAKES

by **KENDRA MAINPRIZE** /// EAC Volunteer

Canoeing on Sandy Lake
PHOTO: Karen Robinson
Inset: Sandy Lake at the People's Parade, June 2025

Sandy Lake Park and Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes (BMBCL) are green spaces within the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), whose forests and wetlands offer respite from the urban centres nearby. These areas provide essential ecosystem services, support biodiversity and offer outdoor recreation opportunities. The existence of these parks is a testimony to the work of grassroots movements that have been advocating to protect these lands from development for decades; however, the fight is not over yet.

HRM's Sandy Lake Park currently consists of 1,100 acres of lakes and forests at the head of the Bedford Basin. While the park is conserved, surrounding lands within the watershed (Sackville River and tributaries) are not. The Sandy Lake - Sackville River Regional Park Coalition calls for the addition of 1,700 acres of this surrounding area to be acquired for the park. Studies have shown developing these lands would mean the loss of mature pockets of Wabanaki (Acadian) forests, declines in water quality and the loss of connected habitats for diverse species (including 15 species at risk). The fight to expand park boundaries has faced many setbacks; already, 300 acres of proposed park land were clear-cut by a developer in 2013.

Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes (BMBCL) is another park within the Halifax Regional Municipality, home to an incredible amount of wildlife, including at least 23 species at risk. Right now, 1,782 hectares are included in the Wilderness Area. The Friends of BMBCL Society has been working to support the creation of the BMBCL National Urban Park (NUP). The creation of the National Urban Park would expand the park boundary to include wildlife habitat and surrounding waterways to better protect the area's ecosystem function. Mary Ann McGrath, Chair of Friends of BMBCL, emphasized that this unique NUP would become a focal point of the community and bring lasting benefits for generations to come.

Kendra (she/her) is a recent graduate from marine biology at Dalhousie University with a love for teaching, tidepools and science communication.

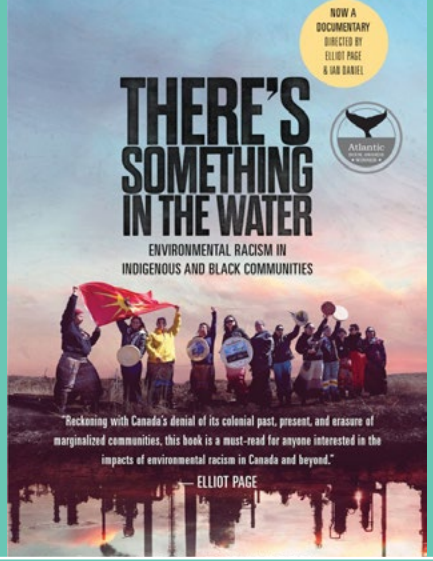
Both coalitions are at critical moments in the fight to save these lands. Areas within both conceptual park boundaries have been designated by the province as Special Planning Areas (SPAs) – sites where sprawling urban developments are proposed to be fast-tracked in the HRM. While the municipality is responsible for conducting studies on the SPAs, the province has the final call. Many feel democracy and transparency have been eroded; there are fewer opportunities for public input and final decisions are being made behind closed doors.

While the affordable housing crisis is a major concern, new developments should serve those that need them most. Both SPAs are expensive and challenging landscapes to develop, and prices of the housing units will likely reflect this. Additionally, both proposed developments are outside of the municipal Urban Service Boundary; costs of extending services and infrastructure as well as the continued dependence on cars will further reduce affordability.

Both Sandy Lake and Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes have been shaped through a long history of community advocacy, and the fight continues against developments encroaching on the conceptual park boundaries. No final decision has been made about the fate of the SPAs. The Sandy Lake and BMBCL regions are already serving us in so many ways – as said by Karen McKendry, EAC's senior wilderness outreach coordinator and Sandy Lake Coalition member, "Just because you could develop there, doesn't mean you should." These grassroots movements implore us to consider what we are losing with the development of these lands and to make our voices heard in the fight for their protection.

Environmentally Unequal:

A REVIEW OF INGRID WALDRON'S "THERE'S SOMETHING IN THE WATER"



by **HANNAH GUINEY** /// EAC Volunteer

Ingrid Waldron is a sociology researcher and HOPE Chair in Peace and Health at McMaster University, a former professor at Dalhousie University and the first research coordinator for the Environmental Noxiousness, Racial Inequities, and Community Health (ENRICH) Project. Waldron's experiences leading the ENRICH Project form the basis of her 2018 book There's Something in the Water. Environmental racism is a form of systemic racism whereby racialized communities are disproportionately burdened with environmental hazards due to unfair environmental policies, exclusion from political and leadership roles and social and economic disparities. The main objective of Waldon's book is to open a discussion about past and ongoing environmental racism in Nova Scotia and Canada, particularly in Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian communities. Waldron argues that there is a "colour blindness" in Canada that makes people reluctant to acknowledge racial inequities, particularly in the context of environmental justice.

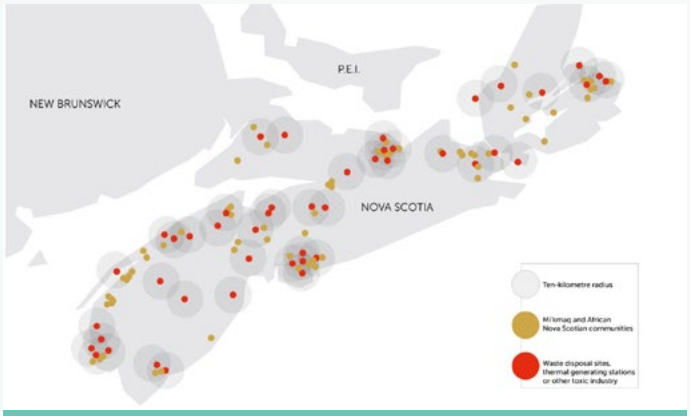
In the first half of the book, Waldron provides some context. This includes when the concept of environmental racism first emerged, the history of colonialism and racism in Nova Scotia and in Canada, an exploration of how our colonial history influences modern social arrangements and a discussion of the various conditions that lead to and uphold environmental racism - including political ideologies and structures like patriarchy, neoliberalism and racial capitalism. Some of the conditions that produce environmental racism are poverty, which can lead to "environmental blackmail" – a pressure placed on low-income communities to host polluting industries which in turn offer (inadequate) financial incentives and (often hazardous and low-paying) jobs; a lack of political power and representation, and subsequently a lack of participation in political decision- making; policy reforms that result in cuts to social services and environmental regulations; and finally a lack of protection and enforcement from environmental organizations and regulatory bodies. Waldron identifies that most environmental regulations are concerned with determining and maintaining "acceptable" levels of pollution but they neglect to protect communities that are disproportionately affected by this pollution.

Hannah Guiney (she/her) is a McGill Earth and Planetary Sciences graduate living in Montreal interested in ecology and social justice initiatives.

TAKE ACTION

A documentary of the same name based on this book was directed by Elliot Page and Ian Daniel in 2019. I would highly recommend both the book and film to anyone who is interested in environmental and social justice issues in Canada.

In the second half of the book, Waldron explores the impacts of environmental racism in Black and Indigenous communities, especially the resulting health inequities, and emphasizes that these inequities are not only outcomes of exposure to environmental contamination and pollution but are also worsened by pre-existing social and economic inequities. Waldron dedicates the penultimate chapter to documenting the resistance movements and experiences from several Black and Indigenous communities who have experienced or are currently experiencing environmental racism across Canada. She concludes with a section of proposed future actions, such as including race in environmental justice, addressing unequal structural and environmental determinants of health and building coalitions and solidarities between marginalized communities. In the book Waldron urges that, beyond protest work, structural and social changes need to be put in place that will prevent environmental racism from manifesting in the first place, "social justice work is a marathon, not a sprint."



A map showing the locations of waste disposal sites, thermal generating station or other toxic industry and their proximity to Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian communities.
The ENRICH Project

How Granting Legal Rights to Nature is Changing Conservation

by **CATHERINE EUALE** /// EAC Volunteer

When the Provincial Government of Loja began clearing forest to widen a road above the Vilcabamba River in Ecuador, local residents knew the excavation debris would choke their water supply. They tried everything—petitions, protests, appeals to environmental agencies. Nothing worked. So, in December 2010, they tried something unprecedented: they sued on behalf of the river itself.

It took months. A lower court initially dismissed the case, claiming the plaintiffs lacked legal standing. But on March 30, 2011, the Provincial Court of Loja ruled in the river's favour, invoking the precautionary principle: until the government could prove the road project wouldn't cause environmental harm, work must stop. For the first time in history, an ecosystem had successfully defended itself in court.

Three years earlier, Ecuador had embedded Rights of Nature directly into its constitution, granting legal personhood to ecosystems. Legal personhood means an entity can hold rights and have those rights enforced in court. In Western legal systems, corporations have been legal persons for over a century, which is how they can own property, sign contracts and sue for damages. Now, ecosystems can too. A river with legal personhood can file lawsuits through appointed guardians, have its interests represented when development projects are proposed and claim damages when harmed.

The concept seems radical now, but for most of human history and across most cultures, rivers were ancestors, mountains were deities and forests were communities. The idea that these beings could be reduced to property is relatively recent, arising from colonial ideologies that treat land as devoid of meaning until claimed for human use.

The failure of traditional environmental protection laws led to the emergence of this legal framework. Environmental laws typically regulate how much harm humans can inflict on nature, not whether we should harm it at all. They treat ecosystems as property or resources, setting "acceptable" pollution limits while rivers die by degrees. Indigenous communities, who have never stopped viewing land and water as kin rather than property, began framing their traditional knowledge as legal grounds in Western courts.

In 2008, Ecuador became the first country to constitutionally recognize these rights, declaring that “Nature, or Pacha Mama, where life is reproduced and occurs, has the right to integral respect for its existence and for the maintenance and regeneration of its life cycles, structure, functions and evolutionary processes.” This recognition emerged from Indigenous Quechua and Kichwa cosmologies combined with innovative legal thinking.

But constitutional rights mean nothing without enforcement, which is why the Vilcabamba River case mattered so much. The court ordered the Provincial Government of Loja to halt construction, present a remediation plan and publicly apologize. It proved these rights are real and actionable. Since then, Ecuadorian courts have applied these rights in dozens of cases, from protecting mangrove forests to halting mining in the Los Cedros cloud forest.

Halfway around the world, similar battles were unfolding with varying degrees of success. In 2017, India's Uttarakhand High Court recognized the Ganges and Yamuna rivers as living entities with legal personhood, affirming their sacred status in Hindu cosmology. The state government immediately appealed, and the case became tangled in jurisdictional disputes that continue today.

PHOTOS: Jimmie Pederson

Similarly, Bangladesh granted legal personhood to all its rivers in 2019, but lacks enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance, leaving river personhood largely symbolic.

Yet across the ocean in Aotearoa, New Zealand, Indigenous persistence is paying off. After 140 years of Māori activism, the Whanganui River became a legal person in 2017. The Whanganui Māori have a saying: "Ko au te awa, ko te awa ko au" (I am the river, and the river is me). The are now two guardians who speak for the river in court — one from the Whanganui iwi and one from the Crown. In 2019, when developers proposed a dam on a tributary, the guardians argued it would sever the river's mauri (life force). The dam wasn't built.

The movement is also expanding beyond entire ecosystems. In 2019, Peru's regional government of Loreto granted legal personhood to stingless bees (Melipona eburnea), the first non-human animal species to gain such legal standing. Indigenous communities have depended on these bees for generations to pollinate forests. When populations crashed due to pesticides and habitat loss, the law recognized them as rights-bearing subjects.

Here on Turtle Island, the movement reached Quebec in 2021 when the Magpie River (Muteshekau Shipu) received legal personhood through parallel resolutions by the Innu Council of Ekuanitshit and the regional municipality. After a decade of organizing against Hydro-Québec's dam plans, the river now holds nine rights, including the right to flow, maintain its biodiversity and be free from pollution. But in Mi'kma'ki, we've barely begun this conversation. What would it mean for the Shubenacadie River to have rights? What about Boat Harbour (A'se'k), poisoned for over 50 years with dioxins and mercury from Northern Pulp's effluent? Could it demand the cleanup of decades of industrial contamination?

Of course, granting ecosystems legal personhood isn't simple. The shift from treating nature as property to recognizing it as a legal person raises complex questions about representation and human to non-human relationships and power dynamics. Who can speak for the river? How can we proclaim what a forest wants? When wolf populations in B.C. threaten livestock, whose rights prevail? Or when a river's right to flow conflicts with a dam that provides renewable energy? These aren't hypothetical dilemmas, but lived tensions that communities around the world are actively navigating.

As Rights of Nature and More-Than-Human Rights organisers emphasise, lasting change comes from communities living in direct relationship with the more-than-human world. These legal frameworks acknowledge what Indigenous peoples have always known: we are kin to the rivers, forests and creatures around us. The Whanganui River has rights because Māori never stopped fighting for 140 years. Manoomin has rights because Ojibwe communities insisted on it. The Los Cedros forest still stands because local people refused to surrender.

Catherine (she/her) is a Venezuelan-Canadian bio-artist and citizen scientist working at the intersection of art, science, and ecology. She is co-author of Fungal Matters for Bio-Based Design.

Driving Transformation:
THE POWER OF COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS IN AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN COMMUNITIES

by **JANE O'BRIEN DAVIS AND CURTIS WHILEY** /// EAC Volunteers

Community members at an early meeting about the establishment of New Communities Incorporated.
PHOTO: Upper Hammonds Plains Community Development Association

UHPCLT staff and board at the groundbreaking for the Upper Hammonds Plains Housing Co-Operative.
PHOTO: Ali's Photography (Sabrina Allison)

The Community Land Trust (CLT) movement traces its roots back to the civil rights era in the U.S. In 1969, a group of Black farmers in Albany, Georgia, were facing eviction by white landowners in retaliation for registering to vote and participating in civil rights activism. In response, the farmers came together with a goal of securing land for Black farmers and their families. They established New Communities Incorporated (NCI), the first CLT. NCI was able to purchase 5,000 acres of land – at the time the largest tract of land owned by Black Americans – and lease it to their community members for farmland access and housing. This model of member-based collective land ownership to meet community needs laid the foundation for the CLT as we know it today.

More than 50 years later, the legacy of New Communities Inc. continues to resonate in Black communities around the world, including here in Mi'kma'ki/Nova Scotia. In 2022, the Upper Hammonds Plains Community Land Trust (UHPCLT) was established by descendants of the original Black settlers of Upper Hammonds Plains, in response to a rapid influx of development that was accelerating land loss within our community.

Upper Hammonds Plains is a historic African Nova Scotian community founded in 1815 by Black Refugees from the War of 1812, along with free Black people seeking freedom and a new beginning in Canada. Our ancestors settled just north of the then-established logging and farming community of Hammonds Plains, laying the groundwork for one of the earliest African Nova Scotian communities in the province. Though they were pushed to the margins, allocated land on the outskirts of more developed areas and forced to endure profound hardship, they persisted, building an industrious, faithful and resilient community.

By 1964, Upper Hammonds Plains had grown into an almost exclusively Black community of around 500 residents, but new challenges arose with municipal and provincial government actions related to land and water expropriation. In 1974, land was expropriated to serve the expanding urban needs of Kijpuktuk/Halifax, Kwipek/Bedford and Halifax County. The expropriation of Pockwock Lake to house the Halifax Regional Water Commission's treatment plant had lasting impacts and the community was never fairly compensated. Although water main lines ran through the community's backyard, its residents were denied access to city water.

Significant advocacy and litigation ultimately led to the community's connection to the city's water system in 1999, some 25 years later. "The Water Fight," as it became known, was a hard-won victory in the ongoing fight for fair treatment.

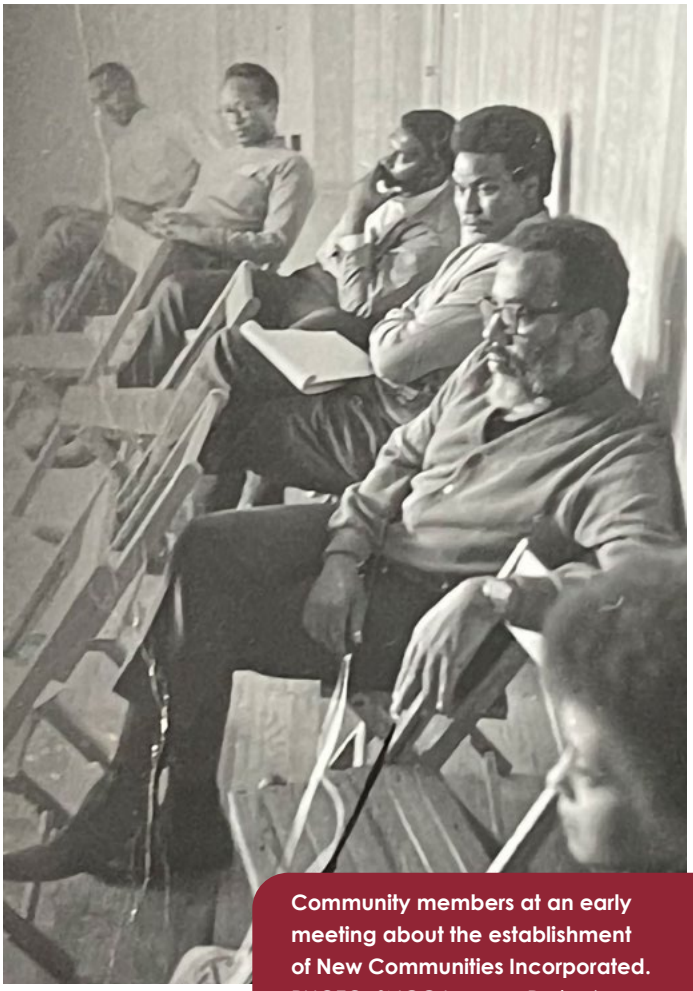
The history of Upper Hammonds Plains stands as a testament to its residents' strength and determination to preserve their legacy and improve the quality of life for future generations. This legacy lies at the core of UHPCLT's mission to preserve African Nova Scotian culture and heritage through collective land ownership and responsible stewardship. UHPCLT uses the CLT model to reclaim our historic lands and ensure that our community members can remain in the place we've called home for over 200 years.

UHPCLT envisions a future where community members play a central role in shaping the growth and development of Upper Hammonds Plains, ensuring fair access to affordable, high-quality housing. In 2024, that vision took a major step forward when the community completed a Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation–funded Housing Solutions Lab, the first of its kind in Atlantic Canada. The Solutions Lab created space for deep, community-led engagement to explore how a community land trust could work in our specific context. Through this process, residents developed membership criteria and a decision-making framework that now guide the direction of UHPCLT and ensure that community voices are meaningfully embedded in how decisions are made.

Our flagship development is the Upper Hammonds Plains Housing Co-operative, a 136-unit townhouse development primarily serving Black Canadians. With a total project value of $61 million, this initiative is the result of years of sustained advocacy at municipal, provincial and federal levels to ensure that public investment in Upper Hammonds Plains directly benefits the community. It represents the largest federal investment in Black-led co-operative housing in Canada's history.

The housing co-operative is only the beginning. UHPCLT is working closely with residents and community organizations to guide the long-term growth of Upper Hammonds Plains in a way that reflects shared values and priorities. A cornerstone of this work is our partnership with Emmanuel Baptist Church (EBC), a long-standing anchor institution in the community. Together, we are advancing descendant-led housing and community development on 8.5 acres of church-owned land, transforming it into a vibrant, affordable and culturally grounded neighbourhood. This partnership reflects a shared commitment to stewarding land in ways that honour heritage, respond to present needs and create lasting opportunities for future generations, while demonstrating how faith-based lands can be mobilized for community benefit.

In addition to our partnership with EBC, UHPCLT has traced the title of 68 acres of undeveloped land, currently held by the Province of Nova Scotia, back to our ancestors. Building on these findings, we are working with the Province to explore the feasibility of reclaiming these historic lands to support additional housing opportunities for community members. Known as Little Pockwock, the site connects to Pockwock Lake and sits adjacent to the housing co-operative. This connection is especially significant, as the community has been denied access to the lake since its expropriation in 1974. The Little Pockwock initiative represents a transformative step toward reclaiming historic lands, restoring community access and ensuring that these lands remain in community hands for generations to come.



Community members at an early meeting about the establishment of New Communities Incorporated.
PHOTO: SNCC Legacy Project

UHPCLT is proud to carry forward the legacy of New Communities Inc. through a commitment to community power, resilience and collective action here in Nova Scotia. Guided by the example of our ancestors, near and far, UHPCLT's work is part of a broader movement for Black land stewardship within the community land trust sector in Canada and beyond. Through collective ownership and long-term stewardship, UHPCLT is not only building housing, but securing the cultural and economic future of Upper Hammonds Plains and advancing a powerful model of African Nova Scotian self-determination.

Community members during UHPCLT's CMHC Solutions Lab.
PHOTO: Ali's Photography (Sabrina Allison)

Jane O'Brien Davis (she/her) is the Project Manager with the Upper Hammonds Plains Community Land Trust. Jane has a background in Urban Planning and Critical Geography; previously, she worked as a Community Land Trust Specialist with the Canadian Network of Community Land Trusts.

Curtis Whiley (he/him) is a sixth-generation African Nova Scotian from Upper Hammonds Plains. Curtis is the founder and CEO of the Upper Hammonds Plains Community Land Trust; he also served for many years with the Government of Nova Scotia as the Director of the Land Titles Initiative.

Reflections on Land Defense as a Settler in Mi'kma'ki

by **CAMPBELL MCCLINTOCK** /// EAC Volunteer

My name is Campbell and I'm a settler of English, Scottish, and French descent living in rural Mi'kma'ki.

This is how I currently introduce myself in spaces committed to land defense and Indigenous solidarity. The exact words have transformed over time, as has their significance to me. What originated as a sense of duty fuelled by "whiteness," privilege and guilt eventually reached its limits. Recognizing the absence of a genuine spirituality in my activism, I asked myself, what is my relationship to the beautiful Wabanaki lands that nourish me, and why do I want to protect them? This question beckoned me to develop a true intimacy with the watershed I call home, and to reflect both on my blood ancestors and on the lineages of anti-colonialism that guide my politics, so that I may act as not merely an ally to Mi'kmaw land defenders, but as an accomplice.

I was born on this continent because, over the past four centuries, my ancestors imposed themselves upon a land that was not theirs. Their reasons for leaving their homelands included perceived opportunities of greater wealth and religious freedom, though in settling across the Atlantic Ocean, they actively participated in the displacement and genocide of Indigenous nations throughout Turtle Island. Today I have the opportunity to scrutinize and attempt to disentangle myself from the illegitimate, inherited spoils of colonialism. Turtle Island has seen over 500 years of Indigenous-led resistance to the violence of colonialism, and by learning from this rich history, I steer my lineage nearer to decolonization and intergenerational stewardship.

Take Chiapas, where, in 1994, the Zapatistas resisted the encroaching Mexican government and newly-signed NAFTA through militant self-defence and established an autonomously governed society in their ancestral homeland – including their own schools, economy and healthcare system. These efforts catalyzed the anti-globalization movement, emboldening communities worldwide to reject the supposed inevitability of capitalist expansion. In that same decade, a contingent of Haudenosaunee, who have one of the oldest and longest-running models of participatory democracy, protected each other, their land and their culture against a federally militarized effort to establish a golf course (a case that is all too familiar to those of us who call Mi'kamki home). This conflict is known as the Oka Crisis. In our own region, Mi'kmaw folks and allies have long engaged in land defense against industry and colonialism, including five decades of resistance to the devastating Pictou County pulp mill and a successful defense of the Shubenacadie River against the Alton Gas project.

These are just a few examples of the many communities who, in the face of unrelenting greed, bigotry and military power, did whatever it took to protect the land and water that materially and spiritually sustained them. Each of these Indigenous nations (and the individuals within them) had their own motivations to combat

Campbell (he/him) is a librarian, organizer, and musician living in Mi'kma'ki. He likes gardening, building things out of scraps, reading books, and building community.

colonialism. Their efforts compel me to consider what I would be willing to sacrifice for this land, as so many generations of Mi'kmaq have and will, so that subsequent generations may have abundant sources of fresh air, food and water.

We all benefit from Indigenous land defense. With the insatiability of capitalist resource extraction, Indigenous-led, anti-colonial land defense is one of the last bastions of hope for our planet's health and integrity. So, for those of settler descent, how can we cultivate our own spiritual relationship to Mi'kma'ki, so that we, alongside Mi'kmaw folks and allies, may defang and diminish climate-degrading capitalist greed in service of a collective future?

When we have discovered our own reasons to live and act in solidarity with Indigenous land defenders, we must then identify and scrutinize the political actors whose power and profit depend upon poisoning our lands and water. Houston's government is increasingly unabashed in these efforts, using Canada- and Nova Scotia-First rhetoric to strong-man cushy contracts to his cronies, all without Mi'kmaw consultation. In the past year, he has lifted hard-won bans on fracking and uranium exploration, criminalized peaceful land defense, overseen raids of Mi'kmaw truckhouses, threatened to revive a defeated golf course project in West Mabou Beach Provincial Park (I'm sensing a trend, Canada!) and slated the sacred lands at Hunter's Mountain in Unama'ki for clearcutting.

Houston's feverish power-grabbing is not merely a spinoff of Trumpian authoritarianism. He is behaving exactly as colonial governments are designed to: to accumulate power for elites by stealing Indigenous land and resources, systematically disintegrating their ability to subsist, survive and self-govern, if not extinguishing them outright. These strategies are numerous and must be rigorously studied to be effectively opposed.

For example, the elites may pit working-class parties against one another, as was attempted in the 2020 Saulnierville treaty lobster disputes, where conflicts were fuelled between settler and Mi'kmaw fisherfolk while the bosses and buyers continued to rake in profits. Or the elites may weaponize a public health crisis, such as Houston's blatant lies about Mi'kmaw truckhouses selling fentanyl-tainted cannabis, in absence of any credible proof and despite the legality of these businesses under the 1752 Peace and Friendship Treaties. Though the colonizer is persistent and well-resourced in their repression of the Mi'kmaq, of African-Nova Scotians and of poor folks across all cultures, they are hardly imaginative. By studying history, we can see how clumsily the colonizer recycles their tactics.

But just beyond the garish spotlight hogged by self-important colonial governments, there have been and always will be models of governance far more democratic and intergenerationally-minded. We will not always do it perfectly, but if we commit to each other, to the land, and to future generations, then we abolish and replace the need for colonial structures. Just this past October, the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw chiefs released a statement declaring their unity against Houston's speed of business and lack of respect in violating Mi'kmaw treaty and land rights, reminding the public that the Province is not the arbiter of these lands. Like the autonomy fought for and achieved by the Zapatistas, we can work toward a model of Indigenous-led self-governance in Mi'kma'ki.

TAKE ACTION

In the face of environmental, economic, and political volatility, we need strong communities more than ever. Try introducing yourself to neighbours and see what issues you have in common. By building relationships with the people around us, we can be more interdependent, and therefore more prepared for the coming changes in the world.

Though I am a settler here, I do not have to bend a knee to colonial powers that blatantly ravage the land I love. This land has so much more to offer the more I embrace it as a free, expansive, and indomitable entity. In my desire to be an effective accomplice alongside Mi'kmaw land defenders, I have begun my own process of creating a true relationship with this land.

From my chosen home on the North Mountain of Kespuktwik, I am becoming better acquainted with the seasonal rhythms. Each morning of the winter I walk toward the waterfall to discover the snowprints of my hare, squirrel, and coyote neighbours. I have watched the brook run full and dry and full again on its rocky descent toward the Bay of Fundy. I have bathed and gasped ecstatically in icy lakes when I start to stink from my haggard off-grid life. I have stepped gently around wild onions and lady slippers and plucked wild blueberries and strawberries. I have searched for black ash trees – favoured for their bark by Mi'kmaw basket weavers – and aspire to support their propagation. I have learned the English names of many plants and trees and perhaps soon their Mi'kmaw names as well. Because of this relationship to the land I am nurturing, when there are frontlines to support, I know what I am there to protect, and what futures we are making possible.

PHOTOS: Raymond Plourde

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Pollution, Politics and Pulp

by **AMY WARD** /// EAC Volunteer

The Boat Harbour tidal estuary
PHOTO: Government of Nova Scotia

TAKE ACTION

Read more about the history of environmental racism and activism from The Pulp Mill in Joan Baxter's "The Mill: Fifty Years of Pulp and Protest."

A'Se'K/Boat Harbour, N.S. has suffered being the site for an Effluent Treatment Facility for over 50 years. Joan Baxter recounts the long saga of protests, broken promises and pollution in The Mill: Fifty years of Pulp and Protest1.

In an interview for this article, Baxter said people kept fighting against the mill because the situation didn't improve.

"The pulp mill was a really extreme, egregious clear case of exploitation," said Baxter, and it did a "great deal of harm" to both local forestry and politics in Mi'kma'ki/Nova Scotia. "That pulp mill, as I always wrote, didn't just pollute the waters and the air in Nova Scotia. It also polluted our government," said Baxter.

Baxter pointed to the effects of centralizing the forestry industry, namely, more clear cutting, softwood growth and use of herbicides. As for Nova Scotia politics, there are many instances of the government making concessions for the mill to keep it in operation since it opened in 1967.

This political history with the mill is, in part, why its closure in 2020 was so remarkable.

The Boat Harbour Act states that the mill had to stop using the Boat Harbour Effluent Treatment Facility as of Jan. 31, 20202. When the mill failed to create alternatives for treating effluent in time, it was forced to close.

The fact that the government followed through with this act instead of extending the deadline is attributable to a few factors, according to Baxter.

1. The patient and persistent work of Pictou Landing First Nation, specifically, Chief Andrea Paul
2. People keeping track of the facts to hold the mill accountable
3. People coming together from all backgrounds with a common message

"It took the citizens exposing that in the media to make a change. And I think that's what built to that [follow-through], that and the pipeline break in 2014 when Pictou Landing First Nation said no, enough is enough," said Baxter.

The work Pictou Landing First Nation did to get then-premier Stephen McNeil to agree to the Boat Harbour Act was aided by the effort of previous generations and media attention.

Despite seeing the power of citizen engagement and activism play out in this story, Baxter said, "I'm not quite sure it would still happen today." She cited the number of concerning projects on the horizon in the province, alongside a concern for corporate capture in our governments. Corporate capture means that regulatory agencies start acting more like cheerleaders and enablers instead of regulators.

Where does A'Se'K/Boat Harbour stand now? While the closure of the treatment facility in A'Se'K/Boat Harbour is a long-fought-for success by the community, clean-up has still not begun six years later.

At the time of writing, the latest updates on the project report a delay due to disagreement between BuildNS (the project lead appointed by the province) and Pictou Landing First Nation. In January 2025, BuildNS received approval from the federal environment minister for their plan to expand the existing containment cell on the site. In February 2025, Pictou Landing First Nation applied for judicial review of the decision because they do not want the sludge to be kept in their community3.

BuildNS and Pictou Landing First Nation have not responded to requests for comment.

One sad aspect of this continued saga is that taxpayers are on the hook for the cost of cleanup, currently estimated at $425 million4.

Baxter said that these long-term costs are not likely taken into account when new industrial projects are proposed. To ensure a long-term benefit, "you want to evaluate the projects, who owns them, who's going to make the most money off them and what the environmental and social costs will be in Nova Scotia," said Baxter.

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Amy Ward (she/her) is studying journalism and enjoys reporting on local politics. She also enjoys music, crafts and the outdoors.

Anarch(ism)y on the Dance Floor

by **ISABEL ATWELL, LENKA TOMLINSON** /// EAC Volunteers

TAKE ACTION

Engage! Talk to people, ask questions and see what really matters to you in your community. Attend local arts events, dance as you can/if you wish, and remind yourself that these spaces and the ultimate goal of them is for connection, to inspire the creativity and critical thinking of yourself & others.

Underground dance spaces, or raves, have historically been a breeding ground for self-exploration, liberation and community. This is due in part to the experimental and impactful nature of electronic dance music and the anti-corporate ethos of the spaces themselves.

Raves emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, and were characterized as "grassroots organized, antiestablishment, unlicensed all-night dance parties, featuring electronically produced music (EDM)" (T. L. Anderson & Kavanaugh, 2007, pg. 500; source E. Waite, 2024).

The rave scene connects individuals through the shared experience of music and movement. The synchronous – albeit varied – social, psychological, emotional and spiritual impacts of dance foster a sense of community and solidarity among individuals – impacts that can extend to social and political movements beyond dance spaces.

Halifax became well known for its rave boom in the 1990s, which opened doors to more accessible, free movement spaces. Christopher Reynolds – known as CPR – is a local DJ and event organizer who remembers this time:

"The 90s were clique-y in terms of subcultures, but suddenly there was this new larger subculture that everyone found a place in. From there you got fresh cross-pollination and collaboration to create a new culture surrounding these events."

Since the late 2000s, Halifax has seen the rise of "post-rave dance parties". The music remains, but the energy has shifted. Jump the Fence collective explains why:

"After the popularity of 'raving' rose, most parties became -and are currently- highly regulated, curated and take place at established clubs and bars. Raving was outlawed, and the dance parties became 'soulless'. Profit motivations overtook the space, pushing alcohol sales and not dancing. The scene became a microcosm of the capitalist regime"

This transition stripped away the original, punk nature of these spaces. Even when event organizers desire this vibe, it comes out pre-fabricated and sanitized. People aren't discussing the so-called "radical" or "anti-establishment" movement anymore. The dance floor had become devoid of the social and political discussions and actions that originally characterized raves.

Then COVID-19 arrived. The pandemic became a pivotal time to re-examine the dance floor. Restricted access to dance spaces reminded people of the collective power imbued in the organized connection that dancing facilitates. The Halifax scene has seen a resurgence of the foundational movements that put Halifax on the map in international music and culture communities.

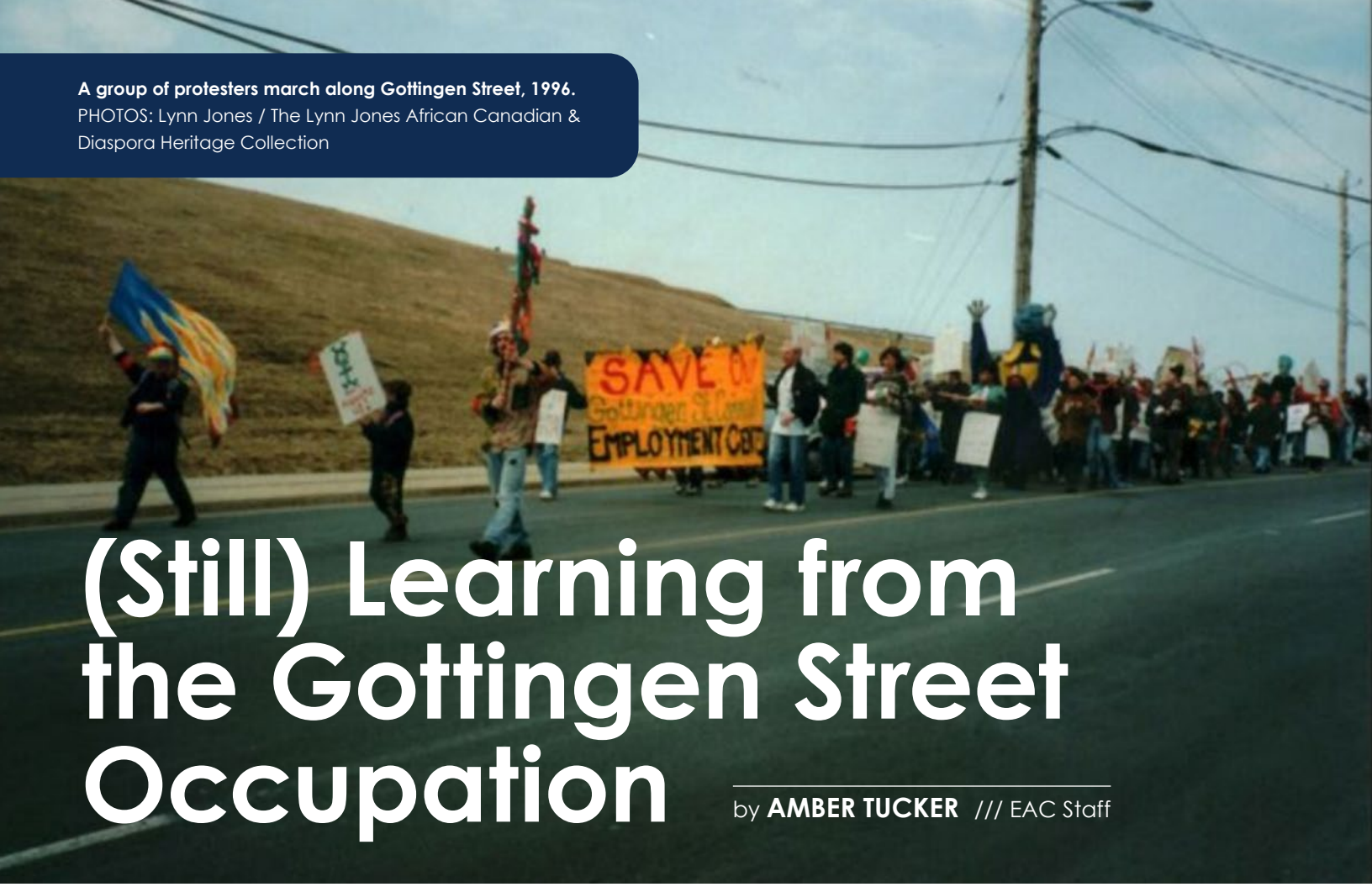
The power of these spaces has become re-invigorated, and re-radicalized. New initiatives such as Nectar Collective and Jump the Fence (JTF) are reconciling the original intention of rave by re-embedding the dance scene with social inclusivity and political intention. As obscure – yet very real – pushes for Israel Defence Force raves emerge, as BoilerRoom gets purchased by the private equity firm KKR, it becomes crucial to remember that these spaces were meant to serve as opposition to oppressive power.

Jump the Fence is a donation-based fundraiser. Their first three shows of 2025 have raised a collective $3,642.75 for causes ranging from local Mi'kma'ki mutual aid to the Sanabel team, a Palestinian food distribution project. The organizers of JTF note: "something beautiful happens when we take the profit out of it. It removes the barrier between the people playing, attending and organizing."

As the political world becomes increasingly scary, we must look to our community spaces to find comfort and action. "It's the politics that makes this special. This is an invitation, and we want everybody's voices there," says JTF.

Poster for a Jump the Fence event, October 2025. @blackboxsoundcru (Instagram)

Izzy (she/her) **& Lenka** (they/she) are ravers and community members at large in K'jipuktuk. They met on the dance floor and now consider it to be home in many ways. Izzy's background is in neuroscience, Lenka's sustainability, but they find their common ground in movement, and local organization.



A group of protesters march along Gottingen Street, 1996.
PHOTOS: Lynn Jones / The Lynn Jones African Canadian & Diaspora Heritage Collection

(Still) Learning from the Gottingen Street Occupation

by **AMBER TUCKER** /// EAC Staff

In March 1996, a small group of employees and community activists walked into a Canada Employment Centre (CEC) in the North End of Halifax, Mi'kma'ki/Nova Scotia, and began occupying it. It was a daring direct action, protesting – and preventing – the federal government's plan to close the CEC.

Among the lead occupiers was Dr. Lynn Jones, prominent African Nova Scotian leader, labour leader and lifelong activist. She generously spoke with me for this article.1 Jones was an employee at that CEC, as well as vice president of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), at the time when she found herself asking how the community could fight to keep the Centre open.

In the wake of federal budget cuts, thousands of CECs were being shuttered or relocated. Kijpuktuk/Halifax's North End had high rates of poverty and unemployment, and the CEC at 2089 Gottingen Street was the only place residents could access these employment services. Jones and other leaders were all too aware of the harm closing the Centre would have. So, when the Department of Human Resources Development Canada refused to negotiate or even delay its closure, the group decided to occupy.

Amber (she/her) is a communications officer at the EAC. She is also an editor, community organizer, and cat mama. She lives in Kjipuktuk/Halifax.

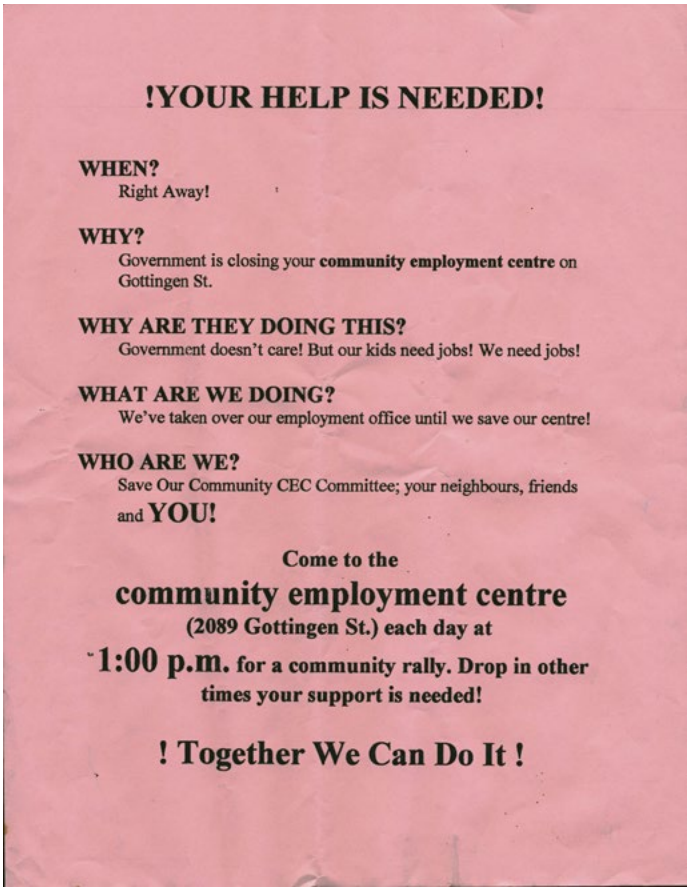
The "Gottingen Street Occupation" would continue for an incredible 122 days.2 Thirty years later, it remains the longest occupation of a federal government building in Canadian history.3 The principles behind its success can continue to inform our movement work today.

1 **Value and strengthen relationships.** Long before the occupation, leaders from the Black community, labour unions, artists and others were used to working together on community issues. Jones calls this "a prescription for organizing." She says, "You just don't decide today that you're going to organize and expect that it's going to be successful. You have to build up a relationship long before you get into it. That's the key." (That doesn't mean exclusively formal meetings. The group that went on to occupy had a regular Friday gathering at the bar after work).

2 **Learn as you go along.** Whether you're planning a march, writing to politicians or crafting a protest puppet, you don't have to be an expert already. When a fellow organizer suggested they occupy the Centre, "I could literally feel the air where we stopped," Jones says. "Most of us had never occupied a place in our life. We'd demonstrated, we'd done different things – we had never occupied." Along with employing known strategies, sometimes we must navigate the discomfort of trying a new one. "But I have less fear of that," Jones reflects, "because I've done it now."

3 **Harness challenging times to build momentum.** "There was such a liberal slash-and-cut agenda, and the communities weren't getting the funding they needed to do their work," says Jones. This was in part why, when the group consulted their respective communities about the plan to occupy, they received unanimous support, "because things had just been piling up for so long." Other like-minded individuals and organizations added momentum: Jones' union, the Public Service Alliance of Canada, provided funds and held a rally in Grand Parade with Bob White (then head of the CLC) as a featured speaker. Newspapers ran sympathetic stories, informing the public about the fight to keep the CEC. Near and far, people backed the occupation.

4 **Make art, fuel change!** Creativity played a meaningful role in the occupation. Jones describes how local artists created a "Save Our Community CEC" sign, a beautiful emblem of resistance that hung over the door. One day, they led a DIY parade down Gottingen Street with neighbours cheering from the sidewalks. "It was a community parade," says Jones, "the best parade I ever attended, to this day." There were flowers, costumes and even homemade puppets (tauntingly named after unsupportive MLAs). Creative expression helps us reclaim our power, gives shape to new visions and invites people to share them.



TAKE ACTION

Brainstorm the threads that connect you with folks in your area. Start talking with people about what would make their lives better. Better housing conditions? Access to fresh food? Affordable childcare? As you get to know one another more, stay open to how you can organize toward that common goal.

5 **Engage the wider community.** The occupiers were far from the only participants over the months-long action. Various groups borrowed the space for learning sessions and meetings, and even sleepovers for the neighbourhood children. Union members across the country wrote letters of encouragement that eventually covered a wall of the CEC. The activists held daily demonstrations, with all ages showing up day after day. Jones describes a spirited atmosphere: "Someone would stand on the soapbox and lead us into songs, and the horns would honk to support, up and down Gottingen Street." She adds, "We had more food than we knew what to do with. The food just kept coming." It grounds us to know that victories are won in community.

After 122 days of occupation, Jones received an early-morning phone call: the government had finally agreed to negotiate. They went on to agree to the organizers' key demands.

By then, however, the community was understandably tired. A year or so later, the Gottingen CEC was moved, then closed entirely, with no pushback. As Scott Neigh writes in Resisting the State, this is evidence that "the work of making change absolutely must be sustained over the long term."4 However urgent a moment may feel, it's only strategic to pace ourselves so we can prevent burnout and organize for the long haul.

Movement history endures as part of the unseen fabric of our lives. The Gottingen Street Occupation deserves to be heard, read and remembered – for what leaders and community accomplished then, and for what their struggle can teach us now.

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The Heart of a Movement

by **STEPHANIE JOHNSTONE-LAURETTE** /// EAC Staff

Walkshop participants arriving at Station 2 - Coal Town Trail.
PHOTOS: Sari Sari Story

TAKE ACTION

Learn about what youth are up to in your community; attend youth presentations, events and school meetings; practice deep listening when youth are sharing concerns and ideas; consider how you or your organization/workplace can support youth, both in-kind and financially.

In 2021, children and youth made up more than a quarter of the population in Glace Bay. Yet, when we discuss community successes, the voices of children and youth are often neglected, favouring older generations whom our society views as "the professionals." But in doing so, we risk discounting some of the more practical, innovative and inspiring success stories offered by the younger demographic in our communities.

In 2025, Parachute, a national organization focused on injury prevention, reached out to the Ecology Action Centre seeking recommendations for the first Atlantic Canada community in their "Walkshop" project. A Walkshop is a mobile workshop following a set route, with stations for participants to stop and learn about initiatives relating to traffic safety, built environment and active transportation. Walkshops engage communities by moving beyond traditional audits and providing structured sharing of active transportation interventions. Previous participants included Guelph, Quebec City, Ottawa; a typical Atlantic Canadian recommendation might have been Halifax, Fredericton or even St. John's. Instead, we recommended the town of Glace Bay.

Glace Bay once prided itself on being the largest town in Canada, but over time its population has declined from 25,000 to a modest 17,000 (StatsCan, 2021). It faces significant socio-economic challenges, with one in every three children living in poverty (CCPA, 2024). Deeply rooted in history, Glace Bay still maintains its original structural layout built around the rail lines that connected the coal mines to the steel plant. While this history inspires local pride, new generations recognize the town has changed and celebrate new projects.

Building on Glace Bay's evolving community identity, the EAC and Parachute worked with local organizations to plan the Walkshop. Early conversations showed a new way to frame the event: rather than focusing on the engineering and planning concepts of a safe commute, we emphasized social needs linked to active transportation. Given Glace Bay's strong youth presence, we wanted to showcase what youth contributed through sustainable mobility and safe spaces.

This article outlines four youth from Glace Bay and the role they played in redefining and reshaping spaces in their town. Our Walkshop had seven stations, two of which were led by youth under 21. Additionally, two youth from Glace Bay High facilitated our follow-up discussion. Their participation reminded adults that youth play a foundational role in community development.

Stephanie Johnstone-Laurette (she/her) gets her motivation working with youth in their communities. She is a Senior Transportation Coordinator with EAC.

Glace Bay…has so much opportunity; all the land that we have, the space that we have, these trails that we have – we just need to…make them more accessible and usable for everyone in the community."

– Quin Losier

Quin Losier & Kail Hewitt

School/University: Grade 12, Glace Bay High

Project: Walkshop, Glace Bay

Background: Members of Changemakers (Glace Bay High)

Successes: Quin and Kail are active community members focused on active transportation and safe spaces for youth to connect. They have participated in several youth-led events supporting leadership and community needs.

Role in Walkshop: They helped lead the post-Walkshop discussion, fostering conversation about what participants learned and what could improve. Their leadership highlighted youth excellence in a space usually led by adults, addressing key issues and expertly engaging the audience.

There's so much unity here, and strength – I can't help but give back."

– Chris Kaiser

Chris Kaiser

School/University: Cape Breton University

Project: Undercurrent Youth Centre, Glace Bay

Background: A previous patron of Undercurrent, Chris wanted to give back to his community and support it as it supported him when he needed it most. After graduating high school, he began volunteering and later working at Undercurrent, which supports hundreds of youth with food, clothing, mental health services and activity spaces.

Successes: Chris demonstrated to the next generation of Undercurrent patrons how being an active member of this space can shape who you are and how you can contribute to a safer, stronger community. His leadership demonstrates how youth can support and inspire each other.

Role in Walkshop: Led Station 4 outside the Undercurrent Centre, highlighting Undercurrent's role, the history of the space and the impact of the new space on youth in the community.

Throughout the three-year period, we were really able to transform the space and make it positive for us and our community."

- Daniel MacGillivary

Daniel MacGillivary

School/University: Cape Breton University

Project: The "Burr" Pedestrian Bridge and Pathway, Glace Bay High

Background: While in high school, Daniel was part of a school group, The Changemakers, who participated in a Youth Mobility Audit in 2019. During this audit, the youth identified the need for a safe walking space to connect the school to nearby amenities. Locally known as "The Burr," the space was unsafe physically and socially. These youth wanted to transform the space into "something positive, something everyone can benefit from – where for all seasons, students could continue to walk for positive physical and mental health without any safety barriers."

Successes: Daniel co-led this group through various presentations to key stakeholders, funders and decision-makers. With the help of adult supporters, over $200,000 was raised to build a steel pedestrian bridge and a safe, accessible pathway connecting the school to nearby stores used daily by 800 students.

Role in Walkshop: Led Station 3A; facilitated discussions on Glace Bay High Burr Pathway on how youth-led projects can create community assets and future leaders.

Younger generations do not simply speak out about their communities' needs, they also plan, support and follow through on their vision of the best future for their community. I continue to be inspired by youths' practical, action-oriented approaches of helping a community or movement thrive.

As the newly inaugurated Mayor of New York, Zohran Mamdani, stated, "If you treat young people with the respect they deserve, not only can they be a part of your movement, but they will be the heart of your movement."

FIND OUT MORE:

Parachute's Vision Zero - Glace Bay Walkshop

Glace Bay Walkshop Video

Undercurrent Youth Centre

Glace Bay High Pathway

Action is our Middle Name

FOOD

While the gardens rest and farm staff plan for the season ahead, the BiHi Park site of Common Roots Urban Farm was excited to launch its new off-grid, solar-powered cold storage. Built in collaboration with many community partners, the project explores how small-scale, community-led food infrastructure can support local community gardens, farms and food groups.

With the build completed at BiHi Park, the full feasibility study and open-source designs are now available and free to access, adapt and build from. We hope this work supports others imagining more resilient, community-led food systems. commonrootsurbanfarm.ca/bi-hi/coldstorage/

PHOTOS: Nicola Nemy

Over the winter, the JustFOOD /Halifax Food Council met with core members of the proposed Halifax Food Council to evaluate the proposed governance structure and consider new ways of working together. Our food system monitoring framework – a major project in partnership with N.S. Public Health – is nearing completion. This framework is intended to live on our online Virtual Food Hub that will support both organizations and individuals interested in food security and sovereignty in the HRM. We've been working on a communications plan to support connections, broadcast opportunities and tell stories about food system work. If you want to say in the loop, please sign up for the JustFOOD newsletter on our website: **justfoodhalifax.ca/**

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The Built Environment Team continues to closely monitor and engage on land-use planning decisions in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) that will have a resounding impact on our local communities and wild spaces.

PHOTO: Jocelyn Brown

We continue to oppose the Special Planning Areas (SPAs), areas the provincial government plans to fast-track urban sprawl. Many SPAs threaten our local ecology and recreation opportunities, while increasing taxes and traffic. With the Wilderness Team, we attended the HRM's open houses on Sandy Lake and Highway 102 West Corridor (Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes) SPAs, working with local coalitions to rent adjacent rooms to the open house. This helps us share details from relevant environmental and traffic studies with attendees. These rooms were widely visited during the sessions, and provided the public with tools to advocate for the protection of Sandy Lake and BMBCL during this critical moment.

PHOTO: Kortney Dunsby

After our continued pressure for proactive advancement on the Halifax Green Network Plan (HGNP), HRM staff presented a progress report in January 2026. This presentation was well attended by members of the community and Council, thanks to diligent advocacy work. We will continue to ensure the HGNP moves in the right direction.

With HRM's Suburban Plan public engagement underway, we are working with staff and residents to ensure strong environmental and community standards are represented in the plan's design. We created public explainers to clarify and offer points of advocacy for community members. We also hosted an event between the Alliance members, HGNP staff and Suburban Plan staff, so resident priorities are being properly included in the plan, such as conservation of our wildlife corridors, protections for our watersheds, accessible transit and active transportation options, and support for local businesses.

MARINE

The Marine Team was on the ground during this year's meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas and played a vital role in efforts to advance sustainable management. After a record number of shark-related proposals, measures were adopted with new protections for basking and white sharks, reduction of catch limits for South Atlantic shortfin makos, and the development of a new process that will close persistent loopholes in shark protection previously exploited by countries.

Over the fall and winter, the Kelp Kurious project has embarked on another year of growing kelp seedlings in our nursery for springtime harvest at our partnering sea farm in Mahone Bay, Indian Point Marine Farms Ltd. This season, we've trialed forced reproduction, growth techniques for Laminaria digitata, and supported the Buchwald Lab's research into seedling growth techniques. We look forward to sharing new market research and resources in the spring and convening stakeholders at Kelp Fest to further support the development of Atlantic Canada's cultivated kelp sector.

COASTAL & WATER

PHOTO: Harry Collins

The Coastal & Water and Marine Teams hosted a high-level meeting with other organizations working in Nova Scotia who are all facing challenges and barriers with obtaining permits for coastal nature-based climate solutions work (e.g. shoreline clean ups; eelgrass restoration). The meeting sought to identify common challenges shared among the groups and potential solutions. The EAC shared these challenges with the Nova Scotia House of Assembly's Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Economic Development at the end of October.

PHOTO: Rowan Swain

The Team completed the Peregrine Accelerator for Conservation Impact program at the end of last year with a final retreat of all participating organizations held in Montreal in December 2025. The program's focus is to develop innovative conservation solutions to support ecological and human health in the North Atlantic Transboundary Landscape. The Peregrine Accelerator was pivotal in developing the capacity of the Coastal and Water Team to support its ongoing work on coastal protection.

In March 2026, we will host two key events. First, a workshop for members of the Coastal Coalition Nova Scotia to help build advocacy capacity with regards to coastal protection campaigns, recognising that despite the province's unwillingness to proclaim the Coastal Protection Act, our collective advocacy continues.

Second, the EAC will host the first International Coastal Access Symposium on March 26, 2026. It will bring coastal access practitioners and advocates from around the world in a one-day, virtual format symposium. The event is free to attend and registration will soon be available on the EAC website.

WILDERNESS

PHOTO: Jessie Winklewicz

Together with our community partners, we successfully defended West Mabou Beach Provincial Park — again. Our team helped support the local community and build province-wide support for saving the park. We aided with sign printing and distribution, raised awareness through media interviews and attended the packed community meeting in Mabou. Together, we managed to save the park from this most recent threat.

This victory was extremely important, not just for West Mabou Beach Provincial Park, but for all provincial parks in Nova Scotia. But we didn't stop there. We pushed back hard against comments from Premier Houston and Natural Resource Minister Kim Masland, who said that this government is open to potential development in any park or protected area.

Until the Provincial Parks Act is strengthened, we know that Nova Scotia will be stuck fighting the same fight over and over. That's why we've continued the campaign to protect these important places in perpetuity by amending the Provincial Parks Act.

In addition to defending existing protected areas, we advocated for designating new protected areas to help us reach the Province's 20-percent-by-2030 commitment. We amplified campaigns for community-proposed protected areas like Ingram River, Chain Lakes, Goldsmith Lake and Minamkeak Lake Wilderness Area and brought together groups from across the province to create a stronger voice for nature conservation.

TRANSPORTATION

PHOTO: Aaron Barrington

Throughout November and December, the Transportation Team hosted a series of bike repair workshops in collaboration with FamilySOS and the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre. Over each 3-session workshop, participants gained hands-on experience with basic bike repair skills necessary for properly maintaining their bike. Dedicated repair stands, work benches and toolkits were also purchased for each centre, so community members will have access to supplies needed to fix their bikes year-round.

As well, we co-hosted a youth summit in February called Get Up & Get Organized for youth age 15-24 in the CBRM and Victoria county region. This focused on how youth can be involved in positive change in their communities, with key examples in food insecurity, active transportation/mobility, planetary health and housing/homelessness.

Our Local Activations program collaborated with the Spryfield Community Association to prepare a site and install a bench at Long Lake provincial park.

Winter Walk Day was held this February. Over 12,000 students across 59 schools and youth groups participated, hosting activities to get students walking and rolling outside for a winter walk!

Back at the workshop, the volunteers at our Welcoming Wheels program have been working hard all winter – to date, they have repaired 25 bikes in preparation for our spring gifting sessions and Bike Buddies program. In collaboration with Mountain Equipment Company, our Shifting Gears program ran a workshop on winter riding and preparing your bike for winter storage.

ENERGY & CLIMATE

The Energy and Climate Team works to inspire change toward greater energy efficiency and a more sustainable, reliable and affordable electricity grid. The Energy Team is online, in the media and in meetings, advocating for what we do want and against what we don't want. We will continue to push back against uranium mining, fracking, biomass and nuclear power.

We've launched some seriously wholesome engagement programming. In September, we began hosting Teens for Climate hybrid meetings for teens grades 9-12 across the province. At Nocturne in October, three new climate badges were launched in partnership with HalifACT. And drumroll, please — we recently published a kid's book, The Great Adventure of ESBy the Electric School Bus, written and illustrated by members of our Energy Team and available in French and English.

IMAGE: Abby Lefebvre, Chris Benjamin

Speaking of electric vehicles, did you know that they can store energy and serve as an electric generator during power outages? Our team is working on reports on how Vehicle to Grid technology can be used to empower communities during emergencies.

Green Jobs and the Just Transition are always top of mind for us. In November, we held a conference in Sydney with New Dawn to assess the potential of starting a social enterprise providing training and jobs in energy-efficiency renovations and maintenance. Eager to see offshore wind developed, but insistent that it be done right, we contributed to January's Call for Information and are working with groups near and far to develop strategic communications.

The Seasonal Gourmet

by **ROWAN SWAIN** /// EAC Staff

Hot Pepper Jelly


PHOTO: Rowan Swain

Sweet with a little kick (or a big one depending on how brave you are), this jelly goes great on all kinds of cheese, meat or other proteins. You can adjust the amount of hot peppers to your own spice tolerance, and get creative with the color by using yellow, red or green bell peppers!

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

1 canning pot (or any pot big enough to submerge the canning jars)

1 large pot for boiling jelly

6 8oz canning jars with lids and bands

Tongs

INGREDIENTS

2 cups of chopped, seeded bell peppers

1 cup seeded hot peppers (Scotch bonnets or habaneros work great)

1 cup finely chopped jalapeño peppers

1 cup apple cider vinegar

1.75 ounces powdered fruit pectin

5 cups white sugar

DIRECTIONS

1. Sterilize the jars and lids by boiling them for about 10 minutes. Turn off heat and leave them in the hot water until ready to add jelly mixture.
2. Blend the bell peppers and hot peppers until liquid (leave the jalapeños unblended).
3. Place the blended peppers and the finely chopped jalapeños in a pot over high heat.
4. Add apple cider vinegar and pectin. Stir constantly and bring to a rolling boil. Remove from heat.
5. Stir in sugar and place back on high heat. Return to a rolling boil for about one minute. Remove from heat and skim any foam from the top of the jelly mixture.
6. Place sterilized jars on a towel, and ladle the jelly mixture evenly into them, filling to about ¼ inch from the top. Screw the lids on tightly. **Tip:** scoop a few ladles in each jar before filling them to evenly distribute the chopped jalapeños.
7. Place jars back into the canning pot with hot water that is not boiling. Water should completely cover the jars. Bring to a boil and process for about five minutes.
8. Remove jars from the pot and let them cool completely. Once cooled, check the seals by pressing the centers of the lids (if it springs back up, the lid is not sealed, and you'll need to refrigerate it).

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ARE YOU READY TO STEP UP AND TAKE COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE ACTION TO YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD?

The Climate Leadership Badge is the newest Badge in HalifACT's Climate Commitment Badge Program! To celebrate the EAC has a ton of **free workshops and events** to inspire people to work with our neighbours and peers to **bring about positive change** and resiliency at a local level.

TO LEARN MORE VISIT: ECOLOGYACTION.CA/CLIMATE-LEADERSHIP-BADGE-PROGRAM

ECOLOGY ACTION CENTRE
Hike-a-Thon
FUNDRAISER

The EAC's Hike-a-Thon fundraiser will be back for 2026!

This event is an incredible way to connect with like-minded people while appreciating our beautiful province and raising money for a great cause.

Visit **ecologyaction.ca/hike-a-thon** to learn more.

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?

Call or email Laura Crovetto and Lis Landry of our membership team.

Call: **902 429 2202 ext. 178**
Email: membership@ecologyaction.ca