

THE VILLAGE GREEN

Number Twenty-eight, October 30, 2020

Do you want to know what local environmental ecological and climate events (on-line and in person) have been scheduled for Grey, Bruce and environs?

They're listed and described at Grey Bruce Climate Action's event listing:
<https://greybruceclimateaction.ca/events>,
where you can also add your own organization's upcoming events.

THE MUSIC OF CHANGE: BARRY RANDALL AND THE GREY BRUCE SUSTAINABILITY NETWORK

The Village Green believes we become more competent by understanding the backgrounds of the people and organizations we encounter in our climate action, since those people and groups exhibit more instructive depth than our transactions with them can ever demonstrate.

In this issue we profile Barry Randall, Project and General Manager of the Grey Bruce Sustainability Network, and the Network itself. Among the things Barry and his organization have in common – both believe in building bridges, not empires.

First, the person.

Barry Randall grew up in Willowdale in a family practicing their faith through Yorkminster Park Baptist Church – a congregation that welcomed the family's interest in music – particularly choral music. From childhood to his middle teens, Barry spent part of each summer at Camp Kwasind, a Baptist Church camp on Muskoka's Skeleton Lake. Over those years Barry came to rebel against the "wise bearded man" paradigm as the centre of religion, but he found, in the natural environment of the camp, a driving force toward his personal spirituality.

As a geography student at the University of Waterloo, Barry had his first encounter with the Bruce peninsula. He was part of a ten-member field team assessing geographical and geological issues to select the best site for a nuclear plant. At the end of the study period, Barry wrote a separate report from other team members: he argued that a nuclear plant shouldn't be located on the peninsula at all.

This field team left Barry with two abiding lessons:

- He wasn't interested in a career that focused exclusively on technical analyses;
- Environmental and social issues were often left out of society's decisions.

Giving up temporarily on higher education, Barry headed with his guitar to visit a friend in Key Largo, Florida. There, he linked up with kindred musicians to make a few dollars performing in local venues. He returned to Willowdale, but the lure of the road beckoned again. He drove with his friend Bill in a VW beetle to Banff, where he took a job on a surveying team. In Banff he met Deb and not soon after... married her (they recently celebrated their 42nd anniversary and he describes her aptly as his life partner).

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Returning to Ontario, he enrolled in a Masters program at the University of Waterloo, focused on environmental sustainability. His thesis examined group action in the environmental movement.

As their family grew, Barry and Deb spent twelve years in Guelph. Barry worked for a local public engagement and advocacy group affiliated with Ralph Nader. Much of his work involved helping establish waste management and recycling resources. Barry spent four years helping to publish Guelph-based *Spotlight Magazine*, a music-focused publication.

Barry maintained an interest in Grey and Bruce, in part because his musicianship drew him to the annual Summerfolk music festival in Owen Sound. In the early 90s he took a job with Bruce County as coordinator of its waste management master planning project. The job entailed creating an integrated system among the vast array of municipal landfill sites in the County, many of them posing environmental hazards because they were situated on riverbanks.

Deb took a position as a high school teacher in Walkerton, and the family moved there. After his five-year Bruce County contract expired, he took a job as Manager of the Grey Bruce Tourism Association. The organization morphed into the Southern Ontario Tourism Association, and then into an Ontario Tourism Region during his tenure (he's no stranger to externally imposed reorganizations).

Barry then took the position of Tourism and Culture Manager for the City of Owen Sound. When his contract with the city expired he took a job for a year as sustainability manager with an engineering firm, responsible for energy auditing and water efficiency studies.

While working in Owen Sound Barry joined the Grey Bruce Environment Group and he co-founded, with Sally Leppard, Victoria Serda and others, the Grey Bruce Sustainability Network (GBSusNet), initially as an informal group. Two years after the Group's incorporation in 2009, it hired Barry as its Project and General Manager. When Deb retired from teaching in Walkerton, the family moved to Owen Sound. In addition to his "day job", Barry joined the board of the Harmony Centre where GBSusNet's office is located, and he has taken a lead role in the greening of the Summerfolk music festival.

GBSusNet's mandate is to connect individuals and groups around Grey Bruce who are working to create more sustainable communities and to facilitate project development. Reflecting the four pillars of sustainability developed by the United Nations (social, human, economic and environmental) the Sustainability Network has taken an entrepreneurial and project-based approach to its work, obtaining funding from a variety of sources, including Trillium grants and funding from Bruce Power. Its very name demonstrates that it's the strength of the network it helps build, rather than the size of GBSusNet itself, that acts as the measure of its reach. Barry is particularly gratified when projects originally nurtured under the Network's wing take flight on their own, with a support base independent of the Network.

In 2011 it developed a strategic plan that is still in force. The plan will soon be refreshed and renewed. It operationalizes five goals:

1. GBSusNet will become the go-to sustainability information network for Grey and Bruce
2. It will conduct sustainability reporting
3. It will enable sustainability projects
4. It will expand board capacity and membership
5. And it will encourage social enterprise activities.

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Since the inception of the Sustainability Network, climate change has emerged as a more visible and urgent issue. Barry reflects with satisfaction on The Sustainability Network's role in helping to create climate action teams in Grey and Bruce. Recently, the Network took an enabling role in the creation of *Grey Bruce Climate Action*, an on-line resource developed by an array of partners that offers three components:

1. A searchable inventory of more than 400 climate and environmental organizations and groups in Grey and Bruce.
2. An on-line discussion resource, allowing folks to conduct on-line dialogues and to post information within more than 20 climate and environmental subject chatrooms
3. And a central listing and description of upcoming climate and environmental events across the two counties and beyond.

Barry points out that the Sustainability Network has helped to raise the issues of food security and homelessness, but that much still needs to be done in terms of these and other social issues. He says that the Network's proximity to the United Way (their offices are across the street from each other) can't help but improve coordination between the two organizations. He also points out that social crises are more obvious in Owen Sound but they exist everywhere across Bruce and Grey.

The pandemic forced the Network to change how it does inter-organizational work. Much of it takes place now via internet-based communications. And this crisis spurred the Network to develop a series of on-line educational modules on climate and environmental issues. In the past years, GBsusNet developed "Sustainable Living Workshops" – day-long, experiential-learning workshops around Grey-Bruce. These have been blended into the new SUSTAINABLE LIVING SERIES of nine free 90-minute interactive sessions on Zoom on alternating Tuesdays over the next months. Hosted by Chatsworth climate activist Vitold Kreutzer, they focus on renewable energy, home energy efficiency, local food and agriculture, waste management, transportation and nature based solutions to improve carbon sequestration. The series premieres on November 3 at 7 pm with guest speaker Dr. John Anderson. People can register for the series through Eventbrite at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/sustainable-living-series-introduction-to-8-virtual-events-tickets-123728943601>. For more information contact Vitold Kreutzer at vitold.kreutzer@gmail.com or at 226-974-2094

At some point the pandemic will be under control, but Barry warns us that our communities must not go back to normal. Climate change needs immediate actions, but the wheels of traditional action move too slowly. He also stresses the need to learn more about how indigenous communities conceptualize and address environmental issues.

As of March 31 2021 Barry will step down as Project and General Manager of the Sustainability Network, but he will remain affiliated with selected projects. This transition will give him the opportunity to pursue other interests, including music (he loves playing in a band). Among those interests is a passion for the engagement of young people in music.

We aren't losing Barry. He is a colleague noted for the transitions he has made in his own life. He will still be here to help our communities to manage the transitions they must make to be enduringly sustainable.

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COLLINGWOOD'S NEW POET LAUREATE: AN ENVIRONMENTALIST

For two years Claudia Ferraro will be the Town of Collingwood's poet laureate, succeeding Day Merrill, the town's first official poet. Ferraro, who grew up in Collingwood, lives in Nottawa. She is completing her last year of Dalhousie University's English and creative writing degree program: her thesis explores the power of eco-poetry as education on climate change.

One of the four priorities Ferraro has as Poet Laureate is to focus on the environmental crisis through eco-poetry, to "*nurture relationships to the times we are living in.*" Says Ferraro:

"Poetry doesn't have to be pompous - I've always looked at it as play and appreciated the room it leaves for wildness to re-enter into our language. I've been exploring how this sort of energy can be experienced not just on the page, but online and with our voices, and where this energy might guide us in communal but uncommon ways."

In taking her leave as the town's first poet laureate, Day Merrill offered these words to Collingwood Council:

*"Now my words drop back
so that new ones can forge ahead.
I slip into the vanguard
assured we will keep moving forward.
New leadership out in front,
supported by fellow words of a feather
who may never head the V, but hold the flock together.
The constant steadfast beating of their wings.
What really makes flight possible."*

There seems to be an affinity between poets and environmentalism, even when their poetry is rooted in broader themes. Liz Zetlin, one of Grey-Bruce's leading climate activists, has just published her latest book of poetry, **Prompted by Happiness**, described as "*a guided meditation on the small moments of sorrow, joy, and happiness that make up a year.*"

Find out more about the book by contacting Liz at ezetlin@gmail.com.

As well Grey Highlands climate activist Brian Henderson is the author of twelve volumes of poetry. His work has been nominated for the Canadian Authors Association Award for Poetry and Brian has been a finalist for the Governor General's Award. Find out more about Brian and his poetry at <https://brianhenderson.ca/>.

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IN MY HUMBLE OPINION: HAZEL McCALLION, THE OVERTON WINDOW AND HONEST ABE

Ranting at politicians is nothing new. It has gone on in democracies for centuries and it's found a new lease on life during the climate crisis. At times I've been one of the ranters. One dear *Village Green* reader recently wrote:

“Unfortunately we need visionaries that are not motivated by power and getting re-elected and who see the signs of human suffering and de-evolving. Seen any around lately?”

Like others, I've sometimes trotted into a politician's office to make my case, assuming that the logic and moral clarity of my case will sweep the politician off her/his feet, but I've sometimes been met with polite smiles and no action.

“Goddam politicians” I've said to myself.

Like others, my passion for a particular cause has led me to expect politicians to take positions that are political suicide for them – positions I might like, but that the majority of their electors don't.

So I blamed the politician. Which leads me to my Hazel McCallion story.

When I was Executive Director of the Peel District Health Council, Mayor McCallion of Mississauga got herself appointed to the Health Council's board to ensure that the Province's French Language Services Act was not enforced in health facilities in Mississauga, even though the law said Mississauga was subject to the Act. My job as ED of the Health Council was to help the Council to figure out how to implement the Act, not to oppose it. McCallion was a formidable take-no-prisoners opponent. The Act was implemented, thanks to fine diplomatic work by one of my bilingual staff, but McCallion won too – she demonstrated to her electorate that she wouldn't buckle under to Bob Rae's imperious socialist hordes who had created the Act.

I moved on, and a few years later I attended a seminar on the evils of urban sprawl. Its keynote speaker was McCallion, the queen of urban sprawl. I took a front row seat. I confess I hoped to see her squirm in the face of the anti-sprawl academics and planners in the room.

But she demolished us. Admitting to the worst excesses of urban sprawl, she blamed us and berated us. Where were we, she said, when suburban municipalities were making sprawlish decisions? Why hadn't we worked harder to get politicians elected who were anti-sprawl? Why had we not mobilized the community to pressure politicians in support of our cause? Had we not failed by surrendering the field to the developers and their supporters? Shame on us!

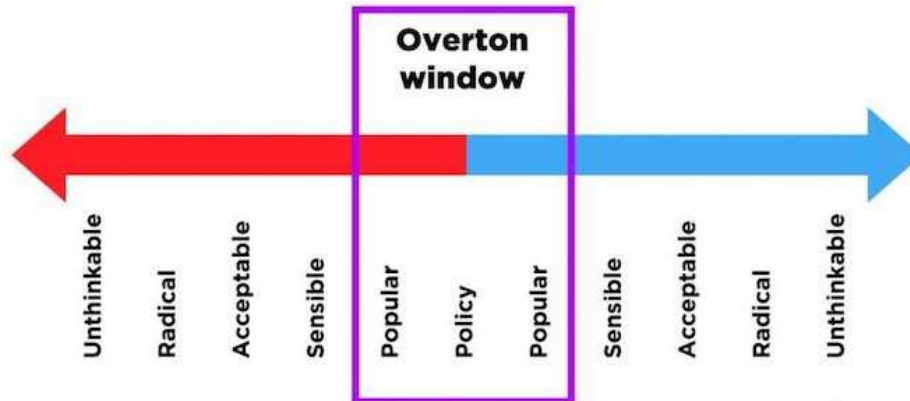
She was, quite simply, magnificent, as only Hurricane Hazel can be.

She was bluntly honest, pointing out that politicians generally support positions that they feel the electorate can accept. If you want the politician to embrace a position before the electorate embraces it, too bad. Do your homework. Change the attitudes of the electorate. Get them to pressure the politicians or to elect new ones.

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I remembered Hazel McCallion – with grudging fondness – when I first learned about the Overton window. Developed in the 1990s by Joseph P. Overton of the American conservative think-tank the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, the Overton window a conceptual tool to help people understand the realities of politicians and help change those realities. It can be shown graphically:



This is how the Mackinac Center’s website describes the Window:

“The Overton Window is a model for understanding how ideas in society change over time and influence politics. The core concept is that politicians are limited in what policy ideas they can support — they generally only pursue policies that are widely accepted throughout society as legitimate policy options. These policies lie inside the Overton Window. Other policy ideas exist, but politicians risk losing popular support if they champion these ideas. These policies lie outside the Overton Window.

But the Overton Window can both shift and expand, either increasing or shrinking the number of ideas politicians can support without unduly risking their electoral support. Sometimes politicians can move the Overton Window themselves by courageously endorsing a policy lying outside the window, but this is rare. More often, the window moves based on a much more complex and dynamic phenomenon, one that is not easily controlled from on high: the slow evolution of societal values and norms.

The Overton Window doesn’t describe everything about how politics works, but it does describe one key thing: Politicians will not support whatever policy they choose whenever they choose; rather, they will only espouse policies that they believe do not hurt their electoral chances. And the range of policy options available to a politician are shaped by ideas, social movements and shared norms and values within society.

All of this suggests that politicians are more followers than they are leaders — it’s the rest of us who ultimately determine the types of policies they’ll get behind. It also implies that our social institutions — families, workplaces, friends, media, churches, voluntary associations, think tanks, schools, charities, and many other phenomena that establish and reinforce societal norms — are more important to shaping our politics than we typically credit them for... If your idea lies outside the window, trying to convince politicians to embrace it is a steep hill to climb. You’ll likely need to start at the ground level, slowly building support for your idea throughout the broader society, and then if it catches root there, politicians will eventually come on board.”

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Using the Overton window as a conceptual tool doesn't mean we stop talking directly to politicians. It does mean that talking to politicians is not enough if we are selling ideas most of the electorate doesn't buy. We need to convince much of the electorate before we can convince most of the politicians.

The description of the Overton window on the previous page says "*politicians are more followers than they are leaders*". This assertion doesn't rule out the possibility that politicians can become leaders, but it does raise the question ***in what ways and through what methods do politicians become effective progressive leaders?***

There may be many answers to the question. Heroism may be one answer (heroism defined as doing something we deem desirable, in opposition to the prevailing reward system). Some elected officials will do what we deem the right thing even if it is unpopular. Unfortunately these hero-leaders often lose elections after having done the right thing.

Another intriguing form of political leadership is explored in the work of American historian and sociopolitical analyst Garry Wills, described most deeply in his book *Certain Trumpets: The Call of Leaders* (1994). He developed the crux of his book after puzzling over anomalies in the political lives of two American politicians revered in and beyond that nation: Abraham Lincoln and Franklin D. Roosevelt. In popular culture, Lincoln and FDR are lauded for steamrolling America forward despite all obstacles in their path.

This is what puzzled Wills. Why did Lincoln not campaign on and push for abolition of slavery until late in the Civil War, despite his own aversion to slavery? And why did Roosevelt do virtually nothing to directly foster the civil rights of Black Americans, even though he was privately appalled at how Black Americans were treated?

In answer, Wills points out that Lincoln couldn't have won the Civil War if he had espoused the abolition of slavery. Four slave states that chose to remain in the Union – Maryland, Missouri, Delaware, and Kentucky – wouldn't have supported the War or the Union if either was predicated on the emancipation of slaves. Lincoln knew that many in these slave states, and in free states too, would fight and die to preserve the Union, but not to end slavery. So he sold the war on the basis of preserving the Union, famously declaring:

"If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that."

Later he freed slaves through the Emancipation Proclamation, but it only freed slaves in states in rebellion against the Union. According to the logic of the Proclamation, slaves were property and the Union had the right to confiscate and free such property in rebel states. Later, the War being won, he pushed forward the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery.

As for Roosevelt, his hold on power rested on the ability of the Democratic Party to hang on to the votes of White southern Democrats. Espousing Black civil rights would have lost him that power base, lost him the presidency and lost him the chance to put in place the New Deal's progressive socioeconomic policies – policies that made life better for Whites and Blacks alike.

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From the successful political lives of Lincoln, Roosevelt and others, Garry Wills derived this lesson: successful progressive leaders are able to calibrate just how far ahead of their followers they can get in order to pull their followers forward with them, without losing the support of their followers.

"There go the people. I must follow them, for I am their leader."

ascribed to **Alexandre Auguste Ledru-Rollin (1807 – 1874),
French populist political leader**

Such leaders exist at the helms of great nations and small municipalities. It would do us well to recognize them and work with them on climate issues. It would also do us well to recognize that while they are not as far ahead as we'd like them to be, they pull the world further ahead than it would be without them.

Yet there is a nagging discomfort that plagues many of us within the climate change movement when we contemplate the incrementalism inherent in the Overton window and the leadership lessons of Garry Wills. As the Mackinac Center's description of the Overton window puts it, it involves *"slowly building support for your idea throughout the broader society."* But given the enormity and urgency of necessary climate action, slow isn't good enough.

To save the planet, can we act quickly enough within the constraints of our current admittedly flawed democracy and consensus-building values? Can we do it through a reformed version of democracy? Can we do it without a completely new economic paradigm to replace the worst features of growth-obsessed neoliberal capitalism – and if we need that new paradigm, can we introduce it in a matter of years, not decades? Or, God forbid, can we only do it fast enough by gutting our democracy and our cultural pursuit of both cohesion and human rights?

Respectfully submitted to the *polis*,
John Butler

CITIES LEAD

C40 (<https://www.c40.org/cities>) is a network of 97 megacities across the world committed to addressing climate change. Its Global Mayors COVID-19 Recovery Task Force has issued a statement and research report that argue for green recover from the pandemic. The statement is signed by the mayors of Montreal, Los Angeles, Milan, Freetown (Sierra Leone), Hong Kong, Lisbon, Rotterdam, Medellín (Colombia), New Orleans, Seattle and Seoul.

The statement says, in part:

"Mayors that make up the Task Force are deeply concerned that only 3-5% of an estimated US\$12-15 trillion in international COVID-19 stimulus is currently committed to green initiatives. By propping up old and polluting economies, the mayors warn a 'dirty recovery' will accelerate climate breakdown, endanger public health, cost lives and sacrifice jobs."

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According to the statement, the findings of C40 research show that:

- Only a green and just recovery will allow for emission reductions. Such a recovery, especially an accelerated one, could more than halve greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, making it possible to deliver on efforts to keep global warming below 1.5°C.
- A return to business as usual will lock in overheating above 1.5°C.
- A green and just recovery could create over 50 million good, sustainable jobs by 2025 across the nearly 100 cities in the C40 network and their supply chains, over a third more than investing equivalent funds into a 'high-carbon recovery'.
- A green and just recovery could save hundreds of thousands of lives by reducing air pollution up to 29% in cities around the world over the next ten years compared to a return to business as usual, preventing over 270,000 premature deaths over the next decade in C40's nearly 100 member cities, and – as demonstrated by existing research by reducing habitat destruction make further coronavirus pandemics less likely.
- Improvements in air quality across C40's member cities alone could lead to over \$1.4 billion savings in health costs resulting from reduced hospital admissions from respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, and wider economic benefits of over \$280 billion over the next 10 years from the value of premature deaths averted. This is particularly valuable at a time when health care systems and public sector budgets are facing unprecedented pressure.
- The timing of the recovery is key. By modelling the impacts of faster stimulus spending enabling an 'accelerated green recovery' over the next five years, compared to a 'slow green recovery' over the next 15 years, the case for early investment by nimble governments, including cities, is clear:
 - An accelerated green recovery could create over 80 million good, sustainable jobs by 2023 across the nearly 100 cities in the C40 network and their supply chains, more than double a slow green recovery. At a time of mass unemployment and economic hardship in many parts of the world, generating jobs now will benefit millions of families.
 - An accelerated green recovery could avert almost twice the number of premature deaths (over 1.8 times as many) between 2020 and 2030, with associated economic benefits from reduced health costs.
 - An accelerated green recovery could lead to half the per capita greenhouse gas emissions of a slow green recovery, and approximately a third of the per capita business as usual emissions by 2030.

The C40 statement on a green and just recovery is at <https://www.c40.org/green-and-just-recovery-benefits> . A summary of the research underlying the statement, and a link to download the research, is at https://www.c40knowledgehub.org/s/article/The-Case-for-a-Green-and-Just-Recovery?language=en_US .

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A PARABLE: TRAINING DAY

A dear reader, one of many in this part of the province who express interest (or concern or skepticism) about whether municipalities that have declared climate emergencies or crises will actually make decisions in keeping with those declarations, has gone a step beyond thinking about He wrote a combined parable and boy-and-dog story that will resonate with many of us (including folks like your Beloved Editor who have a phobia about oncoming trains). Here it is:

“Can I mention a simple story or parody of an oncoming emergency?

I am playing on a railway track when I feel the vibration of an oncoming train. It's far away so I keep playing while making a mess of myself and my surroundings. The train soon can be heard and seen in the distance. I keep playing on the tracks as I find new ways to amuse myself, unaware of the train's speed and size. As the train approaches, its warning whistle sounds as the tracks begin to vibrate more. But under my feet I find some gold nuggets and toys. People on the sidelines begin warning me of the impending danger.

I declare an emergency to get everyone off my back, so I can continue my playfulness and search for more gold nuggets of economic growth and development. The train is not slowing down, the warning signals are blaring, viewers are screaming for me to act. The pressure is mounting, a life and death situation is facing me. This IS an emergency, a crisis. What do I do? My mind seems stuck in gold playfulness and not realizing the impact of remaining on the tracks. Do I get off the track and treat this moment as an emergency, or, disregarding those around me do I continue in my foggy thinking that no matter what, I will survive the impact of the train's force or maybe it miraculously will stop at my feet?...

Let me play on the railroad tracks forever and collect lifetimes of gold nuggets and let's build more railway tracks for me to play on.

Does this show my age and my attraction to trains and old train sets as a boy? In Toronto my family's home was directly beside a two-track train corridor. It got to the point that I didn't even notice the trains going by. They were just part of the scenery, until my friend's dog was killed by a train. I put my train set back in the box it came in and never touched a train set again. I then asked my parents if we could move away from the tracks. Within a few years we moved. But to my consternation, trains were replaced by airplanes. The house was under the pathway of incoming flights at Pearson International Airport.

Karma!!”

In response – still on the track of trains – I shared this with dear reader:

“I met a woman years ago who grew up on a farm near Windsor during the Second World War. The train track from Detroit to Buffalo crossed the property. She told me that every twenty minutes, day and night, a train from Detroit thundered through the family farm laden with war machinery bound for shipment to Europe. The enormity of it terrified her. If we as nations found the will to do that, can we not find the will, nationally and in every city and village and farm, to save ourselves and save the only green ground we will ever have?”

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OUR READERS KNOW A THING OR TWO

First Nations and Aboriginal Rights

A dear reader, who describes herself as “paddling the big waters of the ancestral homeland territory of the Saugeen Ojibwa”, made this observation:

“Perhaps Indigenous land rights issues could be reported on in your newsletter. Reconciliation is important and ongoing. As citizens we each share the burden of the post-colonial fallout of broken indigenous land treaties, and indigenous civil rights. In fact, the UN Declaration of Indigenous Rights was not, is still NOT signed by CANADA, nor the USA. In support of reconciliation, public education on this issue would advance this proclamation.”

Editor’s note: You are right, dear reader. As a result of your observations I contacted Lenore Keeshig and David McLaren, both from Neyaashiinigiing (Cape Croker). Lenore, a poet and folklorist/storyteller, is a daughter of the Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation. She provides outdoor education through guided-hikes (geology, medicine walks) and guided-programs (storytelling and Anishnaabe arts) for tourists, school groups and community members, always putting forth Anishnaabe perspectives and helping people understand their connection to the land and water. Lenore gave me the names of people affiliated with the Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation and the Saugeen First Nation (who combined constitute the Saugeen Ojibway Nation) who I should interview so their perspectives can be shared with **Village Green** readers in subsequent editions.

David McLaren is an author, environmental researcher, administrator and advocate, political organizer and radio commentator (CFOS in Owen Sound), Says David:

“This link will keep [your readers] busy for a while:

<https://www.saugeenojibwaynation.ca/about/resources/>

One can click around that site to find out more about SON - the Saugeen Ojibway Nation (i.e., Chippewas of Saugeen First Nation AND Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation).

It’s not just the title claim that folks should know about, it’s also the fishery rights and management of SON and the Constitutional requirement for consultation. There’s stuff on those on the site too.”

More to follow in later editions, dear reader. The web page for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is at <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html> .

Popes and Politicians

Another dear reader was kind enough to offer feedback on the new direction of **The Village Green**, and she offered a comment on the last issue’s opinion piece:

“You said you wanted to spur reflection with your new format. I would say it’s working. Methinks [Pope] Francis and John Anderson have something in common. You lead me to realize I need to shift my attitude towards the Powers that Be, from ‘You’re not doing enough fast enough’ to ‘What are the obstacles you face stalling action’ and ‘How can we help.’”

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Editor’s Note: Perhaps this week’s opinion piece, *Hazel McCallon, The Overton Window and Honest Abe*, is of some help to those of us like our dear reader and myself who are still exploring how to influence the Powers that Be.

Knowing and Behaving

Another dear reader – a fellow pilgrim with more questions than answers – had this to say in relation to the expanded knowledge base we need if we are to surmount climate change:

“Maybe we need to include in the science list, the science of human behaviour as being something environmentalists need to consider. Our species is clearly out of control with few answers on how to bring it back. Is it just the natural behaviour for procreation mixed with an intelligence that can act on any desire? I have no answer.”

Eleven Words

Eric Saunders is not a dear reader of *The Village Green*, but he often posts on the Grey-Bruce Climate Action Team’s Facebook page. Recently Eric responded to a message of admiration from your Beloved Editor on one of his posts. He said:

“Always groping to understand the world and our place in it.”

His mere eleven words speak volumes about climate action and activists (thank you, Eric):

THE WORDS	WHAT THEY IMPLY TO ME, THE EDITOR
always	Climate action isn’t an occasional thing. It should be continuous and it should stretch beyond the foreseeable future.
groping	We may not always know what to believe or do. But uncertainties shouldn’t stop us from reaching out to find the best truths we can.
to understand	We should learn, converting the learning to wisdom, before and while we act.
the world	Everything is connected to everything. To the extent possible we should understand the totality of creation, not just its parts.
and our place in it	We should understand our current place and our ideal place, recognizing we aren’t above the world judging, but in it, living.

SHE SAID / HE SAID

“It is almost impossible for any social grouping to be corporately or consistently selfless. It has to maintain and promote itself first at virtually any cost – sacrificing even its own stated ethics and morality. If we cannot see this, it might reveal the depth of the disguise of institutionalized evil.”

Richard Rohr, *An Agreed-upon Delusion*,
newsletter of the Center for Action and Contemplation, October 13, 2020

“The best that can be expected of human groups is a wise rather than a stupid self-interest.”

theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moralists and Politics*, in *The Christian Century*, July 6, 1932

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“The Lady Elected in South Grey

South Grey has the distinction of sending to the Dominion Parliament a lady member for the first time in the history of the Dominion. As the returns came in it was thought the lady candidate was going to have a right squeeze, but later returns gave her an overwhelming majority said to be over 2000. It was an Aggienizing [sic] defeat for the two old line candidates in South Grey. The lady wears skirts, but they do not appear to be much of an impediment when she takes a notion to run.”

Flesherton Advance, December 8, 1921.

Next year is the hundredth anniversary of Agnes Macphail's first election win.

“I owed it to my father that I was elected to Parliament in the first place, but I owed it to my mother that I stuck it out once I got there.”

Agnes Macphail

**“You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting –
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.”**

Mary Oliver (1935-2019), *Wild Geese*, 2004

“I would be naïve if I did not point out the difficulty that arises when Canada's majority culture (Christian/secularist in large measure) confuses the cultural and political with the religious. We may, in fact, disagree with elements of the culture and the politics of 'Islamic' nations and peoples, and it is too easy for us non-Muslims to assume that what we disagree with is the religion rather than the culture and the politics. Of course, it would do us well to remember that Christianity and 'Christian' cultures contain exactly the same tensions.

At best we can only chip away at the misunderstandings in tiny little chips. There is no single newspaper article, television show or inter-faith summit meeting that will remove the wall *in toto*. It strikes me as extremely frustrating to Canada's Muslims that they must do most of the chipping. It seems to me that a promising 'chipping tool' might be increased prominence of Muslims in solving many of the social issues plaguing all Canadians. Should Muslims take a greater lead in the environmental movement, for instance, making it clear that environmental health is consistent with Islam's teachings?

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Should Islamic concepts of social justice be espoused by Muslims within those generic Canadian organizations fighting for dignity for all?

Some of this is obviously being done by brave, committed, far-sighted Canadian Muslims already – and as a non-Muslim I can only hope that their efforts are seen by others not as the contributions of fellow Canadians who are coincidentally Muslim, but rather as the contributions of Muslim Canadians acting clearly, publicly and persistently on the basis of the tenets of Islam.”

John Butler, excerpt from published letter to the editor of the *The Muslim Tribune*, January 2000 (forgive my temerity in resurrecting this 20 year old quote from myself)

“In Islam, there are several sayings of the Prophet Muhammed, peace be upon him, where he tells people to pick up trash wherever they see it, or to respect a river and never waste its water. There are similar teachings in other religions, but this is not just a religious idea... The second concept, to be agents of change, is presented in the Quran, the Holy Book of Islam:

‘Truly, God does not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves’ (Quran 13:11).

To put it bluntly, we cannot wait for God. Change can come from us and be supported by God. Prayer is essential but it must be combined with action. In order to act, we must recognize what our actions have done thus far. There’s another verse in the Quran that supports the idea that humans do actually impact the planet:

‘Corruption has appeared on the land and in the sea because of what the hands of humans have wrought. This is in order that we have given them a taste of the consequences of their misdeeds that perhaps they will turn to the path of right guidance’ (Quran 30:41).

To all the self-proclaimed religious people: We send blessings upon our prophets; now, let’s emulate them. It’s time to roll up our sleeves, accept our faith’s imperative and get the Earth out of this ecological mess.”

Ibrahim Abdul-Matin,
author of *Green Deen: What Islam Teaches About Protecting the Planet*, 2010

“There’s a long, long, long list of people who put humor to use for a serious purpose. So, this whole issue – ‘Is this the right time? We can’t make fun of environmentalism!’ – says less about humor and its uses than it does about environmentalism. It’s just this tradition of righteousness.

I had this occasional satiric green advice column called ‘Green Me Up, JJ.’ I used it to critique do-nothing ‘save the planet!’ strategies and the righteousness with which they’re pursued. In one column, an assassin writes in to ask how he can green up his practice. And so, I offer him some solutions. For every person that he kills, for example, he can offset his homicides by making a contribution to the Brady [anti-gun violence] Campaign. And when I presented this once at Stanford, one person said, *‘The one thing that I really love is that you just don’t judge. You just don’t judge this guy. You just give him the tools that he needs to be green.’* I’m thinking, oh my God. Even the most obvious place where you’re using irony and humor, people don’t get it? That is a problem with trying to critique the righteousness of environmentalism.”

public environmental access activist Jenny Price, In a March 23 2020 interview in *Public Books* at <https://www.publicbooks.org/public-thinker-jenny-price-on-refusing-to-save-the-planet/>

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**hesitating
at my hut
the stray deer**

Kobayashi Issa (1763 -1828)

**Only the Divine matters,
And because the Divine matters,
Everything matters.**

Thomas Keating (1923 - 2018)

**For information about *The Village Green*, or to subscribe to it (free), please
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