



# Western Environment Centre

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Newsletter Summer 2012

## From the Editor's Desk

I hope that you are all having a wonderful summer! In this issue, we provide an update on the Blow-Me-Down community garden, now in full swing, as well as the innovative activities of a budding horticulturalist, James Squire. Gardens are always helped by compost and thus you will find information on the magnificent industrial composter recently acquired by Grenfell Campus (MUN), a composter that can collect organic waste from people in the community and also eventually provide them with compost for their own gardens.

Ian Hutchings has written a fascinating piece on that fine geographic marvel known as the Tablelands, located in Gros Morne National Park. This area is quite unique, well worth preserving. We also have a review of a disturbing but enlightening film, *Toxic Trespass: how safe are your children?* The documentary makes a strong case for increased regulation of the chemical industry.

Action on sustainability can take many forms. Gary Kelly, Corner Brook City Councillor, explains his vision for an environmentally sustainable city. You also might find helpful the excerpts from *David Suzuki's Green Guide*, which extol the value of connecting directly with the natural world. This is put into practice to great effect by the fantastic outdoor education program at Killdevil Camp in Gros Morne National Park.

Due to the nature of its mandate, WEC rarely engages in advocacy work. Yet recent decisions taken by the federal government regarding the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act have compelled us to action. We have reproduced in this issue the response letter that we sent to politicians and local newspapers. Speaking out in this way is not something that should be undertaken lightly, but the consequences of inaction are serious and long-lasting. Fortunately, we live in a democracy where our right to speak out is embedded in our values, our political culture, and in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Edwin Bezzina



The Tablelands (see p. 9)



A two-litre sub-irrigated planter (see p. 8)



Grenfell's new industrial composter  
(described on p. 11)



## WEC's Mandate

The Western Environment Centre (WEC) is a charitable, non-profit, non-governmental organization that is based in Corner Brook and services all of Western Newfoundland. Specifically, the organization strives to:

- engage communities in environmental issues in a balanced, objective, and informed manner
- work with community partners, businesses, and government agencies to build capacity and involvement in projects related to environmental action and sustainability
- create a community of environmentally pro-active citizens

WEC activities can be subdivided into the following areas:

- Long-term projects with dedicated funding from outside sources (e.g. the community garden established at the Blow-Me-Down Ski Park)
- Specific environmental events (e.g. Earth Day, Green Drinks, Earth Hour)
- Working committees (e.g. the Outreach and Communications Committee, which produces a quarterly newsletter and promotes WEC events and projects)
- Detailed responses to inquiries about local and regional issues of environmental concern.

### We're on Facebook!



You can find us by searching  
"Western  
Environment Centre"

### We're also on Twitter



(<http://twitter.com/wecnl>)

A hearty welcome to our new  
Board members:

Ian Hutchings  
Glen Keeling  
Ron Zawaski



Check out our fabulous  
website:

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

### Outreach and Communications Committee

Laura Simms.....facilitator  
Edwin Bezzina.....newsletter editor  
Danielle Fequet.....member  
Ian Hutchings.....member  
Angelina Payne.....member

### Board of Directors

Simon Jansen.....Chair  
Rosie Myers.....Vice-Chair  
Danielle Fequet.....Treasurer  
Katie Temple.....Secretary  
Edwin Bezzina

Ian Hutchings  
Glen Keeling  
Laura Simms  
Ron Zawaski

### **WEC welcomes comments and questions!**

Feel free to write to the editorial board ([outreach@wecnl.ca](mailto:outreach@wecnl.ca)) or the Board of Directors ([info@wecnl.ca](mailto:info@wecnl.ca)). We'd love to hear from you.



We have a new phone number:  
**(709) 639-0937**



## A Letter by WEC on the Changes to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act

*The following letter was prepared by WEC's Board and sent to politicians and to major newspapers in the area on April 25, 2012. The letter was written in response to the decision taken by the federal government to make significant changes to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. This Act was passed by Parliament in 1992. It had required agencies, Crown corporations, and federal departments such as Environment Canada to undertake a rigorous process of environmental assessment before any new industrial project can be approved.*



To the Residents of Western Newfoundland,

We are writing to express our concerns regarding the systematic dismantling of environmental oversight in Canada. We are not normally an advocacy group, but recent actions of the Harper government compel us to speak up for Canadian democracy and the integrity of Canadian environmental laws.

The Harper government is in the process of reworking the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, under the guise of “streamlining” and “reducing duplication.” Environmental assessment ensures that major industrial projects are well thought through before they are implemented, that multiple groups are able to contribute their expertise, and that necessary precautions are taken and standards in place to avoid environmental disasters. Resource development has such long-term, broad impacts that a wide range of groups need to be involved to ensure there is a balance of different competing uses and to consider the future consequences of industrial projects prior to development.

The Harper government claims that environmental assessment needs to be “streamlined” in order to facilitate foreign investment. However, we believe their intention is to effectively remove much of the public dialogue around environmental assessment and much of the rigour of environmental review.

Proposed changes to environmental assessment include:

- An arbitrary 24-month maximum deadline for project review, which is based not on scientific process but on political expediency
- Reduction in federal agencies with oversight, from the current forty down to three, removing many scientists and experts from environmental assessment
- Removal of many projects from federal review altogether (some “smaller” projects would require no review, and many projects would only be subject to provincial review, as pointed out by the Pembina Institute, provincial reviews are generally less rigorous than federal reviews)
- Limitation of participants in environmental assessment to only those the government deems “directly affected,” meaning that many Canadians concerned about what happens on Canadian lands would not be included in environmental assessment

*(continued on the next page)*

Image: <http://www.ottawatourism.ca/en/visitors/top-attractions/parliament-hill>

### Five great ways to get involved in WEC

1. Join one of the subcommittees (Outreach and Communications, Community Garden)
2. Join the Facebook group and invite others to do the same
3. Attend WEC events
4. Become a WEC volunteer
5. Participate in the WEC community garden

### How to become a WEC member

(and how to encourage friends to become members):

Please fill out the membership form on p. 12 and then send it by post to our surface address or by scanned copy to our e-mail address ([info@wecnl.ca](mailto:info@wecnl.ca)). Becoming a member is a fabulous first step to becoming environmentally involved in your local community!



## A Letter by WEC on the Changes to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (*continued from the previous page*)

These proposed changes are simply more signs of a government out of touch with the values of Canadians. We want sustainable development that ensures quality of life for current and future generations, but Harper's agenda is to weaken environmental protection. This includes reducing budgets for environmental research, eliminating the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, cutting funding for the Canadian Environment Network and—as reported in the journal *Nature* and by the Canadian Science Writers' Association—muzzling the speech of government scientists.

We support prosperity and responsible development. But, the Harper government is rushing our country headlong into decisions that require careful review and accountability. Canadian values—moderation, fairness, and transparency—are being sidelined in favour of irresponsible resource use without concern for environmental protection or the economic well-being of Canadians. As Canadians, we value our natural resources and seek environmental and economic sustainability. We want our government to look after the needs of people, not just industry. We believe that the many Canadians who have participated in environmental assessment, including First Nations, scientists, labour unions, environmental groups, and others, should continue to have a voice in all development decisions. Ultimately we are all affected.

Unfortunately, recently proposed changes are only the tip of the iceberg. Many more changes are likely forthcoming, and at a time when resource development is increasing in scale. We encourage the residents of western Newfoundland to review the proposed changes, and to contact their elected representatives and tell them they want sustainable development that benefits us all rather than just a select few. Isn't that what our country is about?

Sincerely,

The Board of the Western Environment Centre  
Corner Brook, NL

### Have you heard? Corner Brook now has its own Green Drinks chapter

The concept of Green Drinks emerged as a way for environmentally-minded people from a multitude of backgrounds to mingle, network, and connect over a few drinks. Since its inception in 1989 by a group of friends in London, UK, Green Drinks has gathered momentum and now boasts over 800 chapters worldwide. These informal gatherings are agenda-free and offer a congenial social atmosphere.

These Green Drinks events draw a diverse crowd eager to share insights, debate, and meet new people. Future Green Drinks will be held on the first Thursday of every month at King Henry's Pub in the Glynmill Inn—so mark your calendar! Upcoming Green Drinks in 2012 will be take place on **September 6<sup>th</sup> and October 4<sup>th</sup> (7:00-9:30p.m.)** and all are welcome to attend.

For further information visit: [www.greendrinks.org/cornerbrook](http://www.greendrinks.org/cornerbrook)



logo design by Laura Simms and Daniel Payne



## Spending More Time Outdoors

*David Suzuki's Green Guide* is an excellent resource for specific tips on reducing one's carbon footprint. The work also has great value for encouraging us to deepen our connection with nature. It is in part through such contact that individuals can develop a profound, self-sustaining, and wilful environmental consciousness. Although it seems to be stating the obvious, it is something that we sometimes forget.

Suzuki and his co-author, David R. Boyd write, "Connecting with nature will inspire you to become a better steward of the planet."

Basing their conclusions on scientific studies and research, Suzuki and Boyd note the myriad benefits from spending more time outdoors, from a longer life span, to reduced stress, accelerated recovery from illness, to emotional well-being. Spending time in nature is particularly beneficial for children: it is not only fun and good exercise for them, but it also develops their motor and cognitive skills, provides a positive environment to help them grow as individuals, and teaches them about the complexity, beauty, and wonder of the natural world.

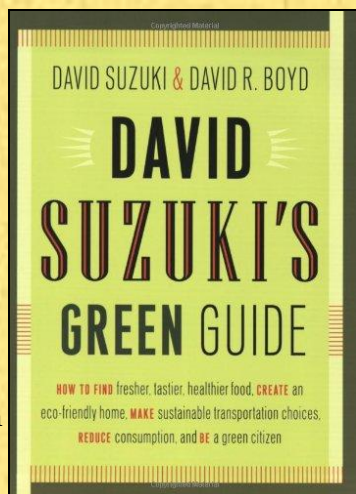
The authors also provide an extensive list of low-carbon outdoor activities, such as:

- hiking
- biking
- canoeing or kayaking
- joining a natural history society
- bird-watching
- swimming in a lake
- gardening
- reading
- going on a guided tour with a biologist or ecologist

Edwin Bezzina

*"Connecting with nature will inspire you to become a better steward of the planet" (p. 139).*

David Suzuki and David R. Boyd, *David Suzuki's Green Guide* (Vancouver: Greystone Books and the David Suzuki Foundation, 2008), pp. 138-141.



## WEC's Annual General Meeting, 2012: An AGM with a View

The Western Environment Centre's Annual General Meeting for 2012 took place on May 30<sup>th</sup> at Harbour Grounds. Hot drinks, a fabulous view of the Humber Arm and chocolate chip cookies were provided to greet current and new WEC members. Throughout the evening prize draws included backyard composters, T-shirts, Bazura Bags and more.

Within this congenial social atmosphere, business was attended to and various 2011 Directors provided updates on the organization's finances, ongoing outreach initiatives, Green Drinks, the quarterly newsletter, our involvement in policy submissions as well as current projects such as the Blow-Me-Down Community Garden. This was followed by nominations and voting for the 2012 Board of Directors.

In addition to returning Directors, we are pleased to welcome Glen Keeling, Ian Hutchings, and Ronald Zawaski to the Board of Directors. It's wonderful to have fresh faces and ideas and we look forward to the creative collaboration to come. We will of course miss the 2011 Directors who will be moving on to other things and places: Susan Pottle, Peter Davison, Kate Edwards, and Erin Kelly. We offer them many thanks for their contributions and dedication to WEC.

Danielle Fequet





## Outdoor Education: Gros Morne National Park

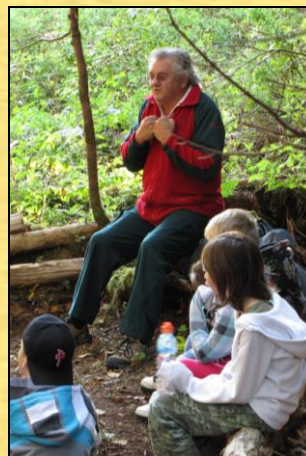
You'd be hard pressed to find a better outdoor classroom than one set in the boreal forest, in a national park, on the edge of a river, with all the associated sights, sounds, and smells of nature right at your doorstep! Since 1997, Parks Canada has been working with the Western School District delivering a hands-on, heads-up, two-and-a-half-day Residential Outdoor Education Program at Killdevil Camp in Gros Morne National Park. Every grade-five student in the Western School District participates in this program, which includes curriculum-based units on science, social studies, language arts, team-building, and art. The program is delivered by both Parks Canada staff and teachers from the District. Activities are designed to enrich and enhance the school curriculum.

We've got it pretty good! No other elementary students in the country receive such an intense experience in their national park: making art, digging for artefacts, experiencing aboriginal culture, making new friends, playing games, hiking on the trails, finding stories in the forest, writing about nature and the fascinating behaviour of moose...all while having fun! To date, more than 15,000 students, 500 teachers and 1,000 parent chaperons have joined us on this educational journey through the amazing classroom that is the Gros Morne National Park.

*"Where the woods and water makes the walls, and the ceiling is as high as the sky!" Dan Murphy, Outdoor Education Teacher (retired)*

And, recently, we've teamed up with staff from Red Bay National Historic Site as well as students and teachers from schools along the Southern Coast of Labrador. We've all had a fantastic time exploring and learning about aboriginal culture and the Basque heritage along the coast. Engaging students in their natural and cultural heritage by visiting national parks and national historic sites strengthens their connections to nature, to culture, to community, and to themselves. Outdoor Education—it's the natural way to learn!

Fred Sheppard  
Outreach Education Officer  
Gros Morne National Park



Photos:  
left: a prospective wild-  
life biologist records his  
observations in a journal

right: Aboriginal interpreter  
Kevin Barnes

Photos courtesy Fred Sheppard

## An Interview with Gary Kelly

*During the last Earth Hour event, Corner Brook City Councillor gave an interesting and helpful talk on aspects of the Integrated Municipal Sustainability Plan. Here, in this interview conducted by Edwin Bezzina, Gary expands on his vision for Corner Brook, providing concrete details about how to connect global thinking with local action.*

*What is your vision for an environmentally sustainable Corner Brook?*

I can speak on the broader level and then more specifically. First, Corner Brook has much to gain by partnering with institutions and institutes that are involved in environmental sustainability, such as the Environmental Policy Institute (Grenfell Campus, MUN). I would like to see Corner Brook expand its recycling program to match that of a city like Halifax, although of course there are many logistical hurdles to doing this; one needs critical mass in terms of population, for example. We are making progress in this regard; now it is more possible to recycle cardboard. I also would like to see water fountains installed in the Margaret Bowater Park, to encourage people to avoid buying bottled water.



Photo courtesy Gary Kelly

*(continued on the next page)*



## An Interview with Gary Kelly *(continued from the previous page)*

That takes us to the issue of water treatment in Corner Brook. Great strides have been made towards building a better facility and tenders are going out for construction estimates and plans. It has been a top priority for City Council for some time now. By contrast, sewage treatment poses a much bigger challenge. The federal government has issued new regulations about sewage monitoring and treatment, but there is currently a lack of sufficient federal infrastructure funding for such projects.

*What has been the reaction to the sustainability initiatives that have been launched by City Hall?*

The new bike paths have been successful. They are a great way to encourage alternative means of transportation. Certainly, biking is a challenge here because of the hills, although one can develop the leg muscles after a while to deal with such obstacles. As well, for a long time Newfoundland has been very much a “car culture,” because of the climate, the topography, the low population density, and the considerable distances between point A and point B. Yet perhaps that attitude will change, especially as we strive to attract people from other cities to come live here. I believe that the city would be enriched by that immensely, and that they would help to make Corner Brook a very vibrant and dynamic place to live.

*At Earth Hour, you discussed the idea of mixing housing neighbourhoods, the concept of a “mosaic” in planning new subdivisions. Could you expand on this and connect the idea to the goal of environmental sustainability?*

I believe that there is something of value to be gained in mixing the type of housing in neighbourhoods. Part of the Integrated Municipal Plan on Sustainability addresses the issue of urban sprawl, which can take place even in a small city such as Corner Brook. The remedy here is that new developments should have a mixture of larger homes with smaller homes and even rental units. This would address issues of population density, land use, and the preservation of environmentally sensitive areas; and, the mosaic concept appeals to people who want to live in a diversified, human-scale community. The idea of mosaic neighbourhoods has been tried in other cities, and with great success.

*How has Corner Brook changed in terms of the extent to which it has embraced environmental sustainability?*

Corner Brook has certainly become more diversified. I think that the people who are moving to the city would like to see a farmers’ market, mosaic communities, bike paths, all the components of a green city. Indeed, our newcomers often come from places where this is already a reality.

It is not always easy to change people’s attitudes or to persuade them to embrace change, but Corner Brook is slowly stepping up to the plate. This is reflected, for example, in the Sustainability Office that was established a few years ago, one that has very effective people working for it. The new City Hall also reflects these goals, and everyone seems impressed with the building’s environmental features, such as the green roof and the water-recycling apparatus. Still, there is much work to be done.

## A Food Skills Workshop Kit!

The Food Security Network of Newfoundland and Labrador (FSN) has launched a Food Skills Workshop Kit as part of its Root Cellars Rock project. The Workshop Kit is a new resource for community groups across the province to host hands-on workshops building local food skills and preserving traditional food knowledge. Topics include container gardening, composting, edible wild plants, seed saving, preparing local vegetables, using culinary herbs, canning, and root cellars. Download the workshops for free to start using today in your community:

<http://rootcellarsrock.ca/workshops>



## Helping WEC as you recycle

Here is a creative way to donate to WEC financially. WEC has an account at Scotia Recycling on 55 Maple Valley Rd (709-634-2025). When dropping off your recyclables, donate by telling the people at the desk that you wish to give the proceeds to the Western Environment Centre. Visit the Scotia Recycling website:

<http://scotiarecyclinggroup.com/services-by-location>. For information on recycling on Corner Brook, visit <http://www.cornerbrook.com/default.asp?mn=1.24.100> or phone their recycling line at (709) 637-1630







The Blow-Me-Down Community Garden is surviving the heat of the summer more or less unscathed. Most of our gardeners are committed to the core and they visit their respective plots whenever they can to give their veggies the water and attention they need. Almost all the plots are rented out this year and the new gardeners are learning by doing. Of course, as with anything, some things work and some things don't. Pests like the cabbage butterfly have still only occasionally found their way to our secret location, but some of the broccoli is in rough shape nonetheless, due to the scathing heat. Let's hope that our garden remains relatively pest-free for a little while longer.

The main success to report about the garden is the transition from a staffed community garden to a volunteer-run project where every member pitches in. Unanimously, gardeners agreed that everyone should have a small additional task to take care of in order to ensure that the garden remains beautiful and functional. General tidying, tool shed maintenance, and compost-turning are now all in the hands of the gardeners themselves. It's a "sink-or-swim" kind of approach, which overall seems to be working quite well.

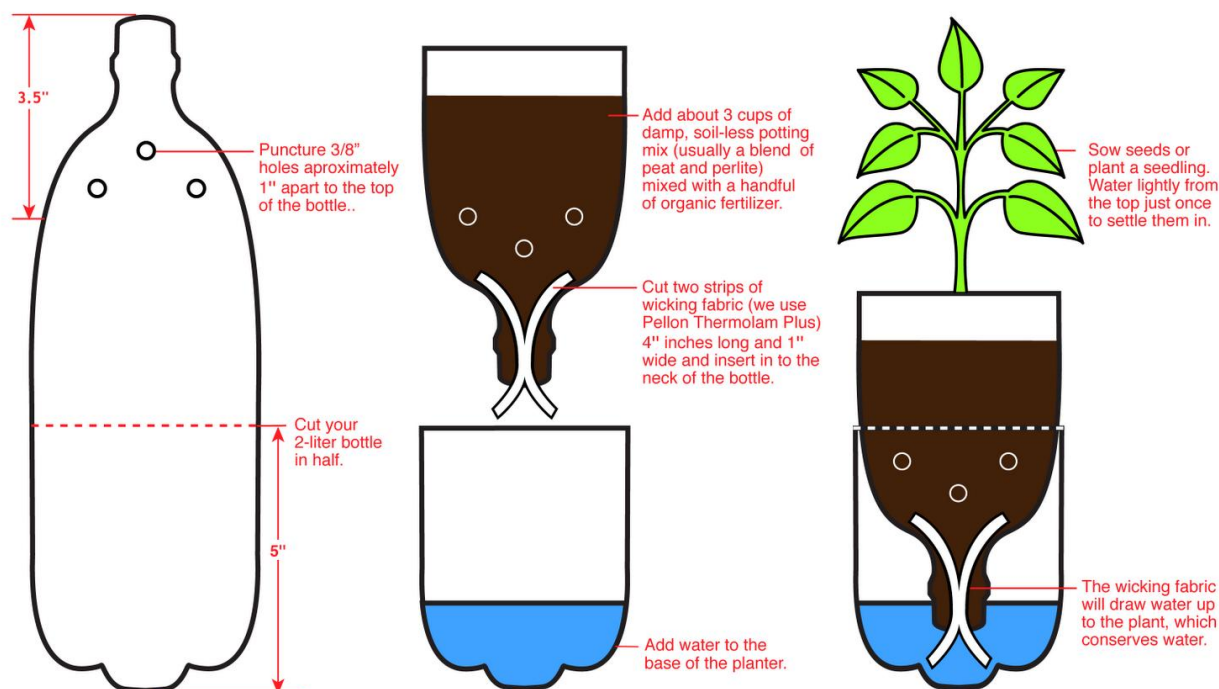
The greenhouse was not in operation this season, unfortunately. This was due to the difficulty involved in making sure that the greenhouse was properly ventilated on a daily basis (it is critical to open the windows every day in order to protect the crop). So we decided to save our pennies, do a few fundraisers, and invest in some heat sensors that open and close the windows as needed. We also ran a very successful garage sale and we are just about ready to make the purchase. Next year will be a greenhouse year for sure!

Simon Jansen

### How to Make a Two-Litre Sub-Irrigated Planter

While browsing some projects to do with our five-year-old son, James Squire, we came across a wonderful idea to make a planter with a two-litre pop bottle. To do this, cut the bottle in half, fill the "spout" side with soil and the rounded bottom with water. Poking holes in the cap and inserting wicking material keeps the plants watered and healthy. We decided on planting Baby's Breath. James absolutely loved watching the plants grow. Every morning, the first thing he did was ask to see how his plants were doing; he asked many questions throughout the process.

### How to make a 2-Liter SIP (sub-irrigated planter)



To learn more visit us at: [greenroofgrowers.blogspot.com](http://greenroofgrowers.blogspot.com) and [The Singing Seed](#) Design: Debbie Kong

We've even worked on pronouncing the word "germinate"! ☺ Even though the plants have moved outside and James is suddenly more interested in the apple tree he planted, he remembers everything about the process and continues to be interested in plants. It was a fabulous learning experience for him!

Toshon Dawe

diagram courtesy Debbie Kong



## Journey to the Center of the Earth

This past spring, I undertook an intense six-week intersession semester as part of the environmental technology program at the College of the North Atlantic. Our geology and soil-engineering course concluded with a field trip to the Tablelands, a majestic and unique region in Gros Morne National Park.

The Tablelands are located between the towns of Trout River and Woody Point. Their juxtaposition within Newfoundland's normal topography makes them impossible to miss. The Tablelands are a sheet of peridotite rock thrust up from the Earth's mantle and transported 100 km when the continental plates collided several hundred million years ago. The peridotite gives the region its otherworldly desert-like character. Peridotite is an igneous (volcanic) rock that originates within the upper mantle of the planet, composed of the minerals pyroxene and olivine. This stuff is normally underground and underwater. Peridotite lacks the usual nutrients required to sustain most plant life, hence its barren appearance. The rusty desert colour is due to its high iron content. Low in calcium, and high in magnesium with toxic heavy metals, peridotite's internal chemistry is inhospitable to most plants.

Still, there is no shortage of water on the Tablelands (see figure 3) and there are several plants that have adapted to life here: carnivorous plants, special hyper-accumulators (which can absorb large quantities of contaminants from the soil), and pitcher plants (figure 2). The latter thrive in the region, as they consume insects for nutrients. Not surprisingly, the pitcher plant is Newfoundland's provincial plant, signifying our hardiness as a people.

While hiking in the Tablelands, a person can stand with one foot on the ocean crust and another foot on the peridotite of the ocean mantle, and thus behold the Mohorovičić seismic discontinuity (or Moho for short). This is the boundary between the planet's crust and its mantle, which normally can be found at a depth of 35 km beneath the continents and about 10 km under the oceans; but it is visible in the Tablelands. In figure 1, you can see that I'm standing in the vegetation "kill zone," the divide between rocks formed in the planet's crust and rocks formed in the mantle.

Want to take a stroll on Mars some afternoon? I can tell you firsthand that the Tablelands feels like being on that planet. Scientists from MUN and NASA are studying the water of the Tablelands to determine if the water and ice on Mars can support life. The water under the rocks of the Tablelands is abundant with life, despite containing little oxygen and having a high pH level.

Areas like this that may have a somewhat barren appearance, but they are still worth protecting. There are not many places in the world where one can stand on rocks that are normally deep under the planet's surface. It's crucial that this highly unique location be preserved for people to enjoy and for scientists to study.

Ian Hutchings



Figure 1: standing in the vegetation "kill zone," the divide between rocks formed in the planet's crust and rocks formed in the mantle



Figure 2: Pitcher plants can thrive in the nutrient-deficient Tablelands by consuming insects.

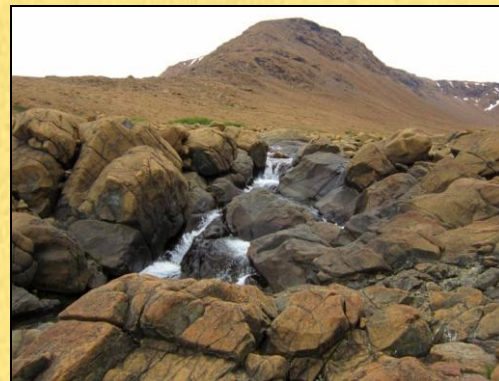


Figure 3: Despite the semi-arid appearance of the area, water flows through the Tablelands.

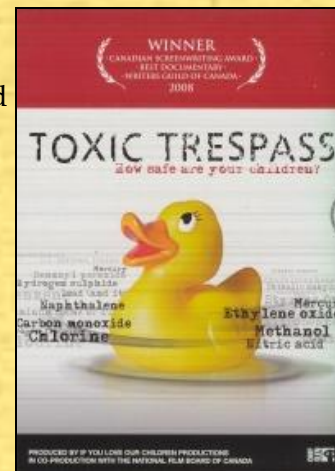
**Note:** if you visit the Tablelands, remember not to gather any souvenirs from the area (rocks, pitcher plants, etc). Gros Morne National Park has been made a UNESCO World Heritage site to recognize and preserve its unique geological landscape. *Sources for this article include my own observations, course notes, Internet research, and contribution of knowledge from other WEC members.*



## Film Review: *Toxic Trespass: How Safe Are your children?*

*Toxic Trespass: How Safe are your children?* Written and directed by Barri Cohen. Co-produced by If You Love Our Children Productions and The National Film Board of Canada, with the support of Women's Healthy Environments Network (WHEN). Released in 2007.

This penetrating film investigates the effects of industrial pollutants on human health, with a focus on children. The film has won critical acclaim and several awards including the Best Writer Award for a Documentary Film from the Writer's Guild of Canada (2008). The film's writer and director, Barri Cohen, has been prolific in the documentary film industry and is known for examining social justice, health and environmental issues and using her work to raise awareness amongst a wider audience.



The film begins with a press conference involving Cohen's then ten-year-old daughter, Ada, following the release of a study by the Environmental Defense Fund that revealed the presence of toxic industrial chemicals in high numbers of Canadian children tested. Both mother and daughter volunteered to participate in the Environmental Defense Fund program; shockingly, their blood tests revealed the presence of harmful substances, such as lead and mercury as well as chemicals associated with stain repellents and flame retardants and even residues of banned chemicals such as PCBs and DDT. Similar industrial chemicals were reportedly found in the bodies of Canadian families all across the country, regardless of location, and many of these trespassing chemicals are known carcinogens and can alter natural hormonal functioning. According to the film, childhood disease rates for some cancers, asthma, as well as learning and behavioral disabilities are also on the rise, perhaps not coincidentally.



The film argues that the increasing presence of toxic chemicals in our environment and bodies is the result of industrialization and that it is no surprise that we are seeing higher incidents of potentially linked disorders such as respiratory problems and various cancers. To dig deeper into how these pollutants enter our bodies (through our air, water, soil, food, and products) and what their effects may be, Cohen takes us on a journey through several "toxic hotspots" in Ontario. The film focuses on the blue-collar cities of Windsor and Sarnia as well as the Aamjiwnaang First Nations Reserve that lies within the latter city. A medical doctor interviewed in the film notes cautiously that disease causation can be difficult to prove in the absence of rigorous health research; yet the film suggests that disease clusters prevalent in "toxic hotspots" highlight the connections between environmental pollutants and disease. For example, the Aamjiwnaang Reserve is bounded on three sides by the largest concentration of petrochemical refineries in Canada; the population here experiences high miscarriage rates and skewed birth distributions (e.g. more female than male children being born each year). These peculiarities are believed to be linked to high levels of environmental contaminants. Such connections between environment and public health become more plausible when one watches the film footage of smokestacks on the horizon in the nearby chemical valley and images of a sludgy uninviting stream running through the community.

Throughout the film, Cohen carries out poignant discussions with activists, doctors, researchers and scientists, all of whom reiterate the need for taking grassroots action on health and environmental issues related to industrialization. Other nations are reportedly moving faster than Canada to ban harmful toxic chemicals and the film suggests that greater focus on public health research is needed to guide regulations for industrial chemicals. One researcher interviewed by Cohen suggests that, although it is ultimately the government's responsibility to ensure hazardous industrial chemicals are adequately regulated, it is our responsibility as citizens to draw attention to these issues so that our governments and leaders will be spurred to protect the health of Canadians and our environment.

See the wonderful resources and tips offered on the film's website: <http://www.toxictrespass.com/>

Danielle Fequet

Photo courtesy Toxic Trespass ©2006 If You Love Our Children Productions/National Film Board of Canada



## The Grenfell Composter

This year, the Grenfell Campus of Memorial University in Corner Brook received an industrial composter, the first of its kind in the region. The purchase of the composter was made possible by generous funding from such partners as the Multi-Materials Stewardship Board. The composter can process up to the amazing amount of one hundred metric tonnes of waste per year.

All kinds of organic waste—especially food, leaves, wood shavings, and paper—can be put into the composter. The composter spins in order to mix the waste and infuse it with oxygen. Air is circulated through the unit by a fan. Through aerobic digestion, heat in the churning waste reaches temperatures of 70°-80° Celsius. Because the temperature becomes so hot, the composter can break down all sorts of food that one would not put in a typical backyard composter, including meat and dairy products.

The composter, which is made by the Québec company AFG-Brome, was delivered to campus in August 2011 and became operational in February 2012. Since that time, compost stations have been set up all around campus to collect waste for the composter. These stations are marked with the signs indicated below.



Glen Keeling (r), WEC Board Member and Chair of the Grenfell Campus Student Union's Environmental Affairs Committee, explains composting procedures to a student

The composter is also meant to help connect Grenfell to the broader Corner Brook community, according to Ryan McDonald, who manages the composter's operations. People from the community can drop off their waste at the Rec Plex, where the composter is housed. Though the compost is currently used on campus for flower and shrub gardens, Ryan said he would like to see people from the community eventually coming to collect compost for their home garden use. Perhaps the most important community role for the composter is its ability to generate discussion around sustainability and the potential for additional composters in the future. Ryan notes, "the whole goal behind it was community involvement and to invite other institutions to come have a look. We're the test." Several businesses, including Coleman's, Tim Horton's and St. John's-based Country Ribbon have all taken tours of the facility in Corner Brook.

The composter not only improves environmental sustainability on campus by decreasing the amount of garbage flowing into landfills, but it also lowers the tipping fees paid by the university. And, the composter is expected to last thirty years, providing a long-term solution for waste management.

For more information, please visit:

<http://www.swgc.mun.ca/compost/Pages/default.aspx>.

Erin Kelly

**DO COMPOST:**

- ✓ **FOOD SCRAPS**
  - ✓ meat
  - ✓ dairy
  - ✓ vegetables
  - ✓ fruit
  - ✓ paper
  - ✓ bones
  - ✓ tea bags
  - ✓ coffee grounds
  - ✓ egg shells
- ✓ **COMPOSTABLE CUTLERY**
- ✓ **LEAVES**
- ✓ **PLANTS AND WEEDS**
- ✓ **POTTING SOIL**



**DON'T COMPOST:**

- ✗ **ROTTEN ORGANIC WASTE FROM THE "DO" LIST**
- ✗ **NON-ORGANIC WASTE**
  - ✗ plastic bags
  - ✗ plastic cutlery
  - ✗ styrofoam plates
  - ✗ glass/porcelain
- ✗ **LIQUIDS**



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Image: <http://www.swgc.mun.ca/compost/Pages/compost.aspx>; photo courtesy Ryan MacDonald





# Western Environment Centre

## Annual Membership Form

Type of Membership: New ☐ Renewal ☐ Lapsed ☐  
annual membership fee: \$10.00

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone number (with area code): (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to be added to our e-mail list? Yes ☐ No ☐

What environmental issues interest you the most?

Coastal habitat ☐ Wildlife ☐ Energy ☐  
Urban Planning ☐ Community Garden ☐ Forestry ☐  
Climate Change ☐ Farmers' Market ☐ Transportation ☐

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Would you be willing to help out with WEC events? \_\_\_\_\_

Would you be interested in sitting on any of the following WEC committees or working groups:

Events ☐ Fundraising ☐ Farmers' Market ☐

Outreach and Communications ☐ Community Garden ☐

Are you interested in becoming a Board Member? Yes ☐ No ☐

How did you hear about WEC? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any additional information for WEC?  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Benefits of Membership

- Receive updates on WEC events and activities
- Receive our newsletter
- Access to WEC resources
- Become part of a growing organization that is committed to protecting the environment in Western Newfoundland and elsewhere

### Office Use Only

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Origin (e.g. walk-in): \_\_\_\_\_

### Payment method:

Cash ☐ Cheque ☐

Memberships are tax deductible.  
Memberships expire after 1 year.

### Please return form & payment to:

The Western Environment Centre,  
Suite 5, 86 West Street (2<sup>nd</sup> floor)  
Corner Brook, NL, A2H 2Z3  
E: info@wecnl.ca  
T: (709) 639-0937

WEC will protect your private information. We never share or sell our membership lists.

To learn more about WEC, visit [www.wecnl.ca](http://www.wecnl.ca) or join us on Facebook or Twitter.