



Western
Environment
Centre
wecnl.ca

Newsletter

Inside this issue...

- A Garden and Compost Pilot Project
- The Market update
- WEC's participation in the review of federal environmental legislation
- Updates on fracking

From the Editor's Desk

One tries to be optimistic, but it is difficult to escape the impression that over the past few months the pursuit of environmental progress has entered a period of regression. In March, for example, the White House announced plans to rescind several important pieces of environmental legislation introduced under the Obama Administration that had intended to meet the nation's climate change reduction targets as a signing member of the Paris Accord. This move by U.S. President Donald Trump could put pressure on Canada to do the same.

In Canada, the major fracking lawsuit undertaken by landowner and environmental scientist Jessica Ernst has suffered a setback. She had provided evidence that the fracking conducted by Encana Energy contaminated her water supply, that the Alberta Ministry of the Environment did little to redress the matter, and that the Alberta Energy Regulator obstructed her freedom of speech. In January, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that an immunity clause forbade private citizens from suing government regulators.

In this province, we learned of the arrest of Justin Brake, reporter for *The Independent*, who was covering the public opposition to the development of the Muskrat Falls energy project. He was arrested for trespassing on Nalcor property in order to interview the protesters who had gathered there to express their concerns about the real threat of methylmercury contamination from the flooding of the reservoir. But, if journalists cannot be allowed to cover a protest, how is the public going to obtain objective news reporting?

Also, to save money the provincial government gutted the Wildlife Division as well as the Parks and Natural Areas Division, laying off many scientists, managers, and workers over the past few years and recently merging the work of these two agencies into other departments. These two agencies thus have lost their independent mandates and will be far less effective in the future.

What can we do? We need to soldier on and continue to make our voices heard. In addition to commenting on much of the above, this newsletter presents a number of new initiatives that WEC is undertaking, including a garden and composting project and involvement in an aquaculture reform partnership with other organizations. You also can read about WEC's letter on fracking and the ways by which we endeavor to disseminate the message of environmental action through community markets and engaging with the public. This issue also contains updates on our involvement in the consultation process to revamp Canada's environmental assessment process. If you are more of a visual learner, then watch for the upcoming sequel to *An Inconvenient Truth*, the revealing documentary about climate change prepared by former U.S. Vice-President Al Gore. His message has become more urgent than ever before!

Edwin Bezzina

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We're on Facebook!



You can find us by searching
'WEC NL'

We're also on Twitter



(www.twitter.com/wecnl)

WEC welcomes comments and questions!

Feel free to write to the editor (info@wecnl.ca). We'd love to hear from you.



Cover photo: The Tablelands
(Gros Morne National Park);
photo courtesy Jessica Galliot

WEC's Mandate

(this mandate includes some changes that were made recently)

The Western Environment Centre (WEC) is a charitable, non-profit, non-governmental organization. WEC is based in Corner Brook but we aim to serve the whole western Newfoundland region. In partnership with other community groups, businesses, and government agencies, our organization strives to:

- 1) Engage communities in environmental issues in a balanced, objective, and informed manner
- 2) Build capacity and involvement in projects related to environmental sustainability
- 3) Create a community of environmentally active citizens.

Project Focus Areas

WEC activities are focused in three main areas:

1. Food Sustainability
 - Community gardens and greenhouse
 - Food skills workshops
 - Community compost pilot (new for 2017)
2. Climate Change and Energy
 - Electric BikeShare Rental Program
3. Public Policy Engagement
 - Participation in government-led consultations

How to become a WEC member

(and how to encourage friends to become members):

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

Board of Directors

Glen Keeling.....Chair
 Simon Jansen.....Vice-Chair
 Rebecca Shea.....Membership Coordinator
 Mikaela Wilson.....Secretary; Treasurer
 Edwin Bezzina.....Newsletter Coordinator

Leanna Butters	Bailey Rempel
Shem Evans	Laura Simms
Jessica Galliot	Roza Tchoukaleyska
Sandy Miles-Blaxland	Kris Watton

Executive Director.....Katie Temple

Five great ways to get involved in WEC

1. Join one of the working committees
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

Bios from our new Board members! Welcome!

Leanna Butters was born and raised in Toronto, Ontario. She came to Corner Brook in September 2015 as a student of the Environmental Policy Institute at Grenfell Campus, Memorial University. Leanna was involved with several community groups in Toronto focused on the stewardship of natural areas and heritage conservation. With an interest in landscape change and the convergence of natural and built spaces, her MA research is looking at how the presence of fly-in/fly-out commuters has impacted the built environment in the community in Deer Lake, NL. Leanna joined WEC as a board member in January 2016 and is excited by the prospect of working on sustainability-related initiatives in Western NL.



Jessica Galliot has eight years of experience working in the forestry industry on the island. She is a registered guide and is passionate about gardening and the outdoors. She is excited to join the WEC team to help support a healthy community.



Roza Tchoukaleyska joined WEC in January 2017, and brings with her experience in community engagement, urban planning policy, and cultural studies. Roza grew up in Ontario and moved to Corner Brook in the summer of 2016. She holds a PhD in Geography from the University of Sheffield, UK, and teaches Environmental Studies at Grenfell Campus.



WEC Joins NL Coalition for Aquaculture Reform

The Western Environment Centre has joined the newly formed NL Coalition for Aquaculture Reform (NL-CAR). The coalition is still in the early stages and has not yet formalized its terms of reference, but it is comprised of many different groups and individuals who are all interested in the sustainability of the province's fishery, food supply, and environmental health. The goal of this coalition is to develop a strong and unified voice to address ongoing concerns with aquaculture in the province. Stay tuned for more news from NL-CAR!

Just Grow It! A Garden & Compost Pilot Project

The Western Environment Centre has a new pilot project that we'll be working on during the upcoming spring, summer, and fall. It's called "Just Grow It!: Garden & Compost Pilot Project." The purpose of the project is to work with a designated neighbourhood to set up a community composting and garden skills learning program.

We'll start the project in April by canvassing the neighbourhood of Humber Heights in Corner Brook to find about 100 volunteer participants, or approximately 30 households. Participants will then receive information on how the program will work. They will receive a small household kitchen bin to collect compostable scraps, as well as some reading materials explaining what items can and cannot be composted.

If interested, participants also can sign up for a variety of food skills workshops which will take place from May to October, delving into such topics as backyard composting, container gardening, square foot gardening, and season extension. These workshops also will be open to the general public, so you can watch for information about dates and times as we get closer to spring.



Three community compost bins will be installed near the local Heights Community Garden, located at Brandon Municipal Playground, off Batstone's Road. Project participants will be able to drop off their compostables at the bins each week; if mobility is an issue, participants will be able to request a weekly pick up.

Our composters can create finished compost in as little as six weeks (unlike the typical one-two years needed for a typical backyard composter in Newfoundland). The finished compost is an extremely valuable resource for gardeners and will be offered to project participants and to local community gardeners or will be potentially sold as a small fundraiser for our organization.

Workshops will also take place at the same municipal playground and, in addition, there will be two or three neighbourhood parties organized to celebrate local food and food knowledge. At the end of the growing season, we will evaluate this pilot project to see how well everything has worked and we will determine whether the project can continue into the future or even expand into other neighbourhoods.

To enable this project to get off the ground, funding has already been secured from the provincial government's Multi-Materials Stewardship Board (Solid Waste Management Innovation Fund), the Community Foundation of Newfoundland & Labrador, and the TD Friends of Environment Foundation. A huge thank-you to all funders and supporters! We look forward to making this project happen this year!

Katie Temple, Executive Director

Photos courtesy Jessica Galliot

Market Update

The Western Environment Centre participated as a vendor at last fall's Wonderful Fine Market, which ran from September to December 2016 at the Legion on West Street. We are a vendor member of the Market Cooperative and are excited to support and be involved in this community project.

We regularly set up a table with various items to sell, and used it not only as an opportunity to fund-raise, but also to chat with members of the public about our projects, environmental issues, and other hot topics of the day. We also distributed our newsletter, signed up new members, did a couple of demos with our e-bikes, and ran some very well-attended food skills workshops (more details on these workshops below!).

This year was our second year participating at the market, so we are still working to streamline our efforts and determine what sells best! This year we again sold homemade crepes, hot from the pan, at every market day. We were also able to sell some local produce, most of it harvested from our own community gardens and greenhouse. Items included mixed salad greens, kale, potatoes, onions, apples and a variety of herbs like basil, oregano and mint. Near the end of the market season, as fresh produce became scarcer, we started to make and sell fresh multi-grain bread and other baked goods. We were happy to see many repeat customers, some of whom bought a fresh crepe every week or stocked up on our fresh loaves to have in the winter when the market is closed.

Our food skills workshops went very well at the market this year, and we were at maximum capacity for most of them. Our first workshop was on fermentation, and specifically, on how to make sauerkraut. We did a hands-on demonstration, as well as a taste-testing. Many participants told us later that they successfully made their own sauerkraut at home later on. The next workshop was on how to make kombucha, which is a healthy fermented tea beverage. Again we brought in all the materials and did an interactive demonstration, so that participants could easily try it again at home with confidence. Lastly, we ran a seed-sprouting workshop, which was equally as popular as the two fermenting sessions. At this lively session, we showed them how to sprout a variety of different seeds and beans such as sunflower, chickpeas, beans, alfalfa, clover, and so on.

WEC attracted many new members through these food skills workshops at the market, because all workshops are free for WEC members.

Overall, we were very pleased with the market season in 2016. We generated a little over \$1,000 in net profit, met new people, had many great conversations and had lots of fun. We're looking forward to the 2017 season and plan to greatly increase our fresh produce for sale, as well as make a few other positive additions. We hope to see many of you there!

Katie Temple, Executive Director

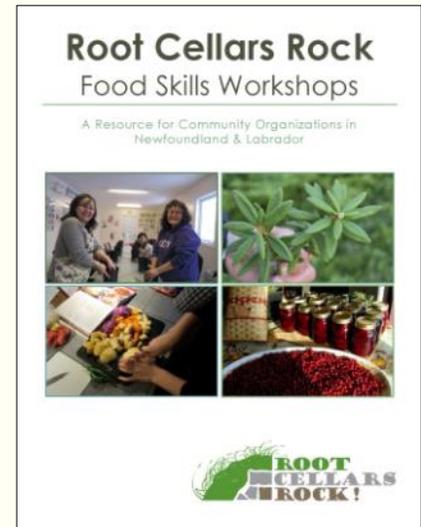


Emma Bocking at the Wonderful Fine Market

Photo courtesy Katie Temple

The Food Skills Workshop Kit!

The workshop kit is a free resource created by Food First NL designed to support community groups across the province with hosting 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 and start using them in your community today:
<http://www.foodfirstnl.ca/our-resources/food-skills-workshops>



A Sequel to *The Inconvenient Truth*!

Watch for the powerful sequel documentary on climate change by former U.S. Vice-President Al Gore, due out in theaters this July.



Images courtesy Paramount Pictures

WEC Participates in Federal Environmental Legislation Reviews

Early in 2016 the Federal Government announced that it would be conducting a review of Environmental Legislation, specifically The Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, The Navigation Protection Act (formerly called the Navigable Waters Protection Act), and The Fisheries Act.

Government has said that the review is largely in response to the omnibus budget bill of 2012, which drastically changed the scope of these acts. Over the past few months, although often referred to as one larger review, input from the public was sought separately for each piece of legislation. The Western Environment Centre participated in all three consultations.

The Navigation Protection Act

Before the changes in 2012, essentially any body of water deep enough to float a canoe in was protected by the federal government. This meant that with some exceptions Canadian bodies of water were covered by other federal legislation such as Environmental Assessments. The 2012 changes redefined navigability and created a “schedule” of waterways which were considered to be navigable, removing protection status from a huge number of lesser water bodies which were deemed not as important to economic activity. In its submission to the federal review, WEC recommended a return to the former Navigable Waters Protection Act that had existed before 2012; WEC also recommended public access to water and recognizing cultural and indigenous usage.

The Fisheries Act

WEC participated in a series of consultations undertaken by the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans, consultations that were aimed at environmental groups. Summary documents from these sessions were presented to the review panel, and these submissions will carry more weight than individual submissions. There were a wide range of recommendations, most of which were aimed at restoring protections in the Act prior to 2012. Before 2012, the Fisheries Act used to prohibit the destruction of fish and any activity that would entail the harmful alteration, disruption, or destruction of fish habitat (known as HADD). One recommendation that came out of our DFO session was to restore HADD protections.

Also, WEC recommended changing the definition of “serious harm,” removing the word “permanent” and that the current stipulation that economic value and the health of the fishery must be proven for the harm to be considered “serious.” WEC put forward many other recommendations, such as the elimination of the current procedure whereby the proponent conducts its own environmental assessment of any project near a body of water.

The Canadian Environmental Assessment Act

WEC participated in this through an online tool. Currently, for a formal environmental assessment to take place the proposed project would have to be included on a list of eligible undertakings. This is a change from the former “triggers” system and has resulted in significantly less oversight on projects. For example, from 1995 to 2000 nearly 25,000 projects were subject to CEAA screening; but only ten of these projects resulted in a full review. WEC expressed concern with the current review system that no longer ensures compliance or oversight for thousands of undertakings. WEC also recommended steps that would ensure public confidence in the outcome of environmental reviews.

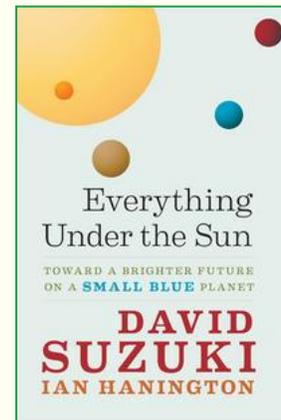
The reviews should be released this upcoming spring. We will provide an update about the outcome when results become available.

Glen Keeling

Books to Read and Love!

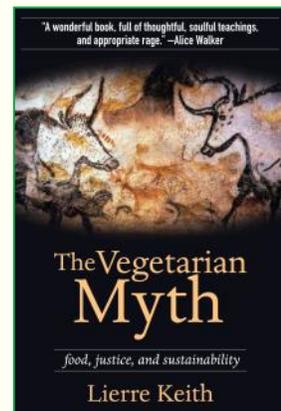
David Suzuki and Ian Hanington, *Everything Under the Sun: Toward a Brighter Future on a Small Blue Planet* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2012).

This is a highly readable, well-researched, and balanced book that delves into our fundamental interconnectivity with all living things and how that fundamental realization is critical to our collective survival. The authors also outline the current environmental challenges facing the world and present viable solutions for dealing with them, solutions that are economic opportunities in themselves.



Lierre Keith, *The Vegetarian Myth: Food, Justice, and Sustainability* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2009).

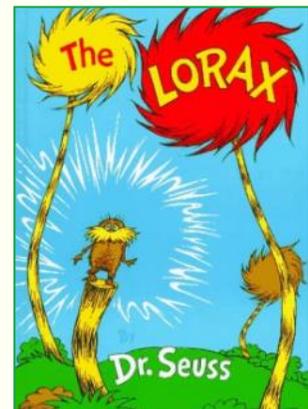
This book will really open your eyes to important questions about how we make decisions about the food we eat. It outlines how currently large-scale industrial agriculture has been so environmentally destructive around the world, and points to a new direction for eating that makes us, and the planet, happier and healthier. Interesting read for all types of eaters: omnivores, locavores, vegans, vegetarians and everyone in between!



And for the budding young environmentalist...

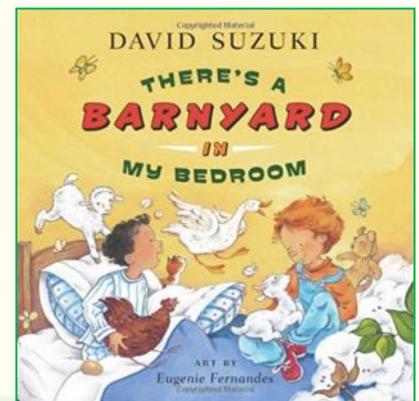
Dr. Seuss (Theodor Seuss Geisel), *The Lorax* (New York: Random House Books for Young Readers, 1971).

The mysterious Lorax teaches twelve-year-old Ted about greed and how it affects humanity's relationship with the environment. An important tale told within the fun and silly world of Dr. Seuss.



David Suzuki and Eugenie Fernandes, *There's a Barnyard in my Bedroom* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2008).

An entertaining book for kids that appeals to their sense of curiosity while teaching them about nature. It includes a list of suggested activities that allows kids and parents to take action together.



Contributors: Edwin Bezzina, Katie Temple, Laura Simms

The Ernst Case Suffers a Setback

The Western Environment Center has been reporting on the case presented by Jessica Ernst against the Alberta Department of the Environment, the Alberta Energy Regulator and the oil and gas producer Encana Energy Corporation. With considerable evidence, she claimed that the company conducted several hundred shallow hydraulic fracturing operations for coal bed methane near her land in Rosebud, Alberta and thus badly contaminated her water supply with thermogenic methane and fracking chemicals.

After many failed attempts to have the problem rectified, in 2007 she decided to launch a lawsuit against the company, but also against the Alberta Ministry of the Environment for negligence and the Alberta Energy regulator for infringing on her human rights as guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. With regards to the Regulator, officials in that office tried to forbid her from presenting her case to the media, which thus infringed on her right of free speech.

The case attracted much interest here in western Newfoundland because several junior oil companies have proposed fracking operations along the coast (after an independent panel conducted a review, a pause for such fracking operations was recommended).

Although unsuccessful in the Alberta courts, Ernst's legal defence took the case to the Supreme Court.

This past January, by a slim majority vote, the Court rejected Ernst's argument against the Regulator and argued instead that the regulator had immunity from legal action undertaken by private citizens because such actions would impinge on the Regulator's operations and deplete it of resources and time. Ernst's defence countered that such immunity was unconstitutional because the protection of human rights takes precedence. Dissenting voices on the Court also noted that the Regulator's actions were so egregious that they fell outside the protection of the aforementioned immunity clause.

Despite this setback, Ernst will continue with her lawsuit against Encana and the Alberta Ministry of the Environment. Nevertheless, the Supreme Court's decision has not gone unnoticed. It gained national news coverage. And, civil liberties agencies such as the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association have expressed dismay at the Court's decision, noting that it sets a dangerous precedent and could impede future efforts by Canadian citizens seeking to hold government agencies and regulators accountable. When launching lawsuits against government agencies and large corporations, private citizens are already at a disadvantage because of the immense financial and legal resources needed to pursue such a lengthy and expensive undertaking. The Supreme Court's decision in the Ernst case has made this imbalance even worse.

Edwin Bezzina



Photo courtesy Aiden Mahoney



image www.jfs.gc.ca/scs/ccs/index-eng.html

Letter from the Provincial Government on the Fracking Panel Review Report

WEC Board's wrote a letter to the provincial government asking what actions the government plans to take on the review panel report on fracking in Western Newfoundland that came out last spring. The report recommended a "pause" on fracking development until 85 recommendations are implemented, many of them regarding as crucial "red light" priorities. The Minister of Natural Resources, Ms. Siobhan Coady, responded and the bulk of her letter is provided below (WEC's questions are in bold print).



Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Department of Natural Resources
Office of the Minister

[...]As you are aware, the Panel completed its report in May 2016 consisting of 85 Supplementary Recommendations to advise on the actions to be taken if further consideration is to be given to permitting unconventional oil and gas exploration and development. The Panel developed a colour-coded format (red, yellow and green) to indicate the stage at which the recommendations should be implemented. The 17 red stage recommendations, which are primarily related to public policy and processes, must be undertaken before lifting the pause on accepting applications.

In response, I assembled a Review Team to assess and analyze the recommendations, document the gaps and deficiencies identified, and prepare a way forward to determine an appropriate course of action respecting hydraulic fracturing in the NL context. The Review Team is tasked to report to me on its research and findings. Since the Panel had recommended that the red stage recommendations must first be implemented before lifting the 'pause' on hydraulic fracturing, the initial focus has been on reviewing these recommendations. A response to your questions follows.

Will you make an official response to the panel review?

The Review Team has been assessing the red code recommendations. Most of these recommendations require input and analysis from other government departments. Many of the recommendations are multifaceted and potentially require significant resources to implement. As such, these recommendations require a thorough and holistic analysis, which is ongoing.

Will you acknowledge the recommendations in the report?

Upon finalization of the internal review, I will be in a position to address a way forward respecting unconventional oil and gas exploration and development.

Will you establish a buffer zone around Gros Morne National Park, as recommended by the panel review?

This is a red code recommendation (PR7) of the Panel, and is currently under review.

(continued on the next page)

Letter from the Provincial Government on the Fracking Panel Review Report

(continued from the previous page)

Will you continue the current "pause" on hydraulic fracturing?

The Panel Report contained a Primary Recommendation to continue a 'pause' on hydraulic fracturing until certain recommendations are implemented. Government accepted this recommendation.

Will you legislate a moratorium or a ban on hydraulic fracturing?

A decision respecting unconventional oil and gas exploration and development will be forthcoming upon finalization and approval of the Review Team analysis of the red code recommendations. [...]

Save Gros Morne and Our West Coast Facebook Site

Save Gros Morne and our West Coast aims to disseminate timely information on proposals to conduct horizontal slick-water hydraulic fracturing (fracking) along the West coast of Newfoundland. See their facebook site for updates, news, announcements, videos, photos, and especially an extensive list of resources relating to fracking dealing with many aspects of the topic (public health, fracking chemicals, what is happening in other provinces, and so on). It's a wonderful resource!

<https://www.facebook.com/SaveGrosMorne>



Photo courtesy Natalie Thomas

The St. Lawrence Coalition

From their mission statement: The St. Lawrence Coalition was created to persuade government bodies to issue a moratorium on oil and gas exploration and exploitation in the Gulf of St. Lawrence as soon as possible. The St. Lawrence Coalition aims at bringing the gulf communities together, which share the same concerns and appreciate the natural resources of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Our coalition is inter-provincial as five provinces are involved: Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Québec, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

ST-LAWRENCE
COALITION
SAINT-LAURENT



OIL AND GAS
FOR A
MORATORIUM
IN THE GULF

website: <http://www.coalitionsaintlaurent.ca/en/coalition>

e-mail: coalitionstlaurent@me.com; Sylvain Archambault phone (418) 686-1854; cell (581) 995-4350

Check out the **Port au Port/Bay St. George Fracking Awareness Group** on Facebook for useful links and information!

CLIMATE CHANGE. HABITAT PROTECTION.

Your kind of challenge.

Have you always been conscious of your carbon footprint or concerned about the way industry is impacting the environment around us? Explore and expand your career opportunities with a masters of environmental policy. Find yourself in a class of your own at Grenfell Campus. findyourcorner.ca

GRENFELL CAMPUS | MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

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.



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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?

Wildlife Energy Urban Planning

Food Climate Change 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:

BikeShare Community Compost Market

Newsletter 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?

To learn more about WEC, visit www.wecnl.ca or join us on Facebook or Twitter.

Benefits of Membership

- Receive updates on WEC events and activities
- Receive our newsletter
- Free entry to workshops
- 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 valid for 1 year (Jan – Dec).

Please return form & payment to:

The Western Environment Centre,
50 Main Street (2nd floor)
Corner Brook, NL, A2H 1C4
E: info@wecnl.ca
T: (709) 640-1734

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