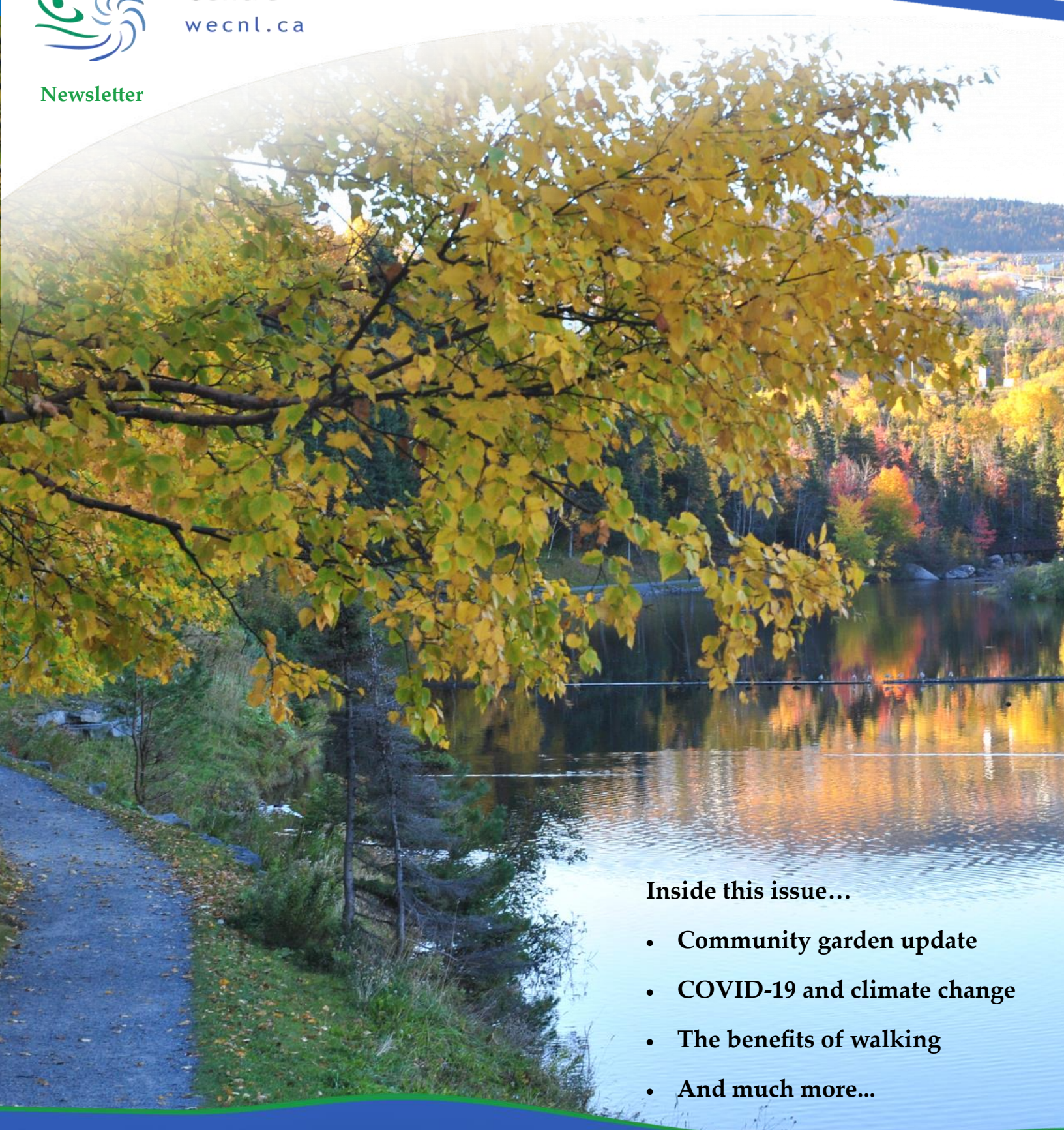




Western
Environment
Centre
wecnl.ca

Newsletter



Inside this issue...

- **Community garden update**
- **COVID-19 and climate change**
- **The benefits of walking**
- **And much more...**

From the Editor's Desk

We are now in the seventh month of this pandemic and we still do not see the light at the end of the tunnel. People have lost their livelihood, others are dying of the virus, companies are folding, and governments are struggling to keep up with the aid required to prevent economic collapse. We have not seen a global disaster of this scale in decades. Naturally, our focus remains continually on it.

It is indeed natural and even understandable for people to direct all their energies and their thoughts to such a catastrophe. It is so immediate and pressing. About a year ago, there were massive public demonstrations and marches around the world calling for greater action to stop climate change, all inspired by the actions of the young environmental activist, Greta Thunberg. One could feel the momentum of an enormous grassroots movement to raise awareness about climate change, that things were moving forward. And now? Who can think about climate change when so many people have died of COVID-19 and when will we feel comfortable venturing outside of our homes?

COVID-19 has not made climate change any less real or immediate. The effects, in fact, are worsening by the day. Take, for example, the forest fires that have been raging in the western United States, fires that have burned over four million acres of land in California alone, fires clearly attributed by scientists to climate change. According to the wildfire statistics provided by the Congressional Research Service, the number of acres of land burned by the fires has doubled compared to the 1990s (<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/IF10244.pdf>). We cannot afford to de-prioritize climate change.

Some of WEC's activities are on hold until the pandemic is over, but there is still much that we can do in the meantime. There is nothing stopping each and every one of us from encouraging governments to implement climate-change initiatives while governments work hard to resuscitate the economy. Simon Jansen has written an article to show us how.

In spite of COVID, we can still venture out of our homes, taking all the necessary precautions; and, the slowdown may offer an opportunity to try something different. In this issue, I offer my thoughts on the benefits of walking more and driving less. What may seem like a difficult sacrifice actually can give the active pedestrian better health and a greater sense of well being. Read as well about the work done by people involved in the Humber Valley Fruit Rescue Program as well as the two new community gardens in Corner Brook. It is heartening to see people trying hard to live more environmentally sustainable lives, in spite of the challenges that COVID has imposed on us.

This global pandemic has caused widespread turmoil and hardship, no doubt. However, once the pandemic has receded, if we try we can chart a better course for ourselves and our communities.

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: Margaret Bowater Park, Corner Brook (photo E. Bezzina)

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

Humber Valley Fruit Rescue

Humber Heights Community Compost

School Garden/Greenhouse Partnership

Participation in the Wonderful Fine Market

2. Climate Change and Energy

Collaboration with Climate Watch NL

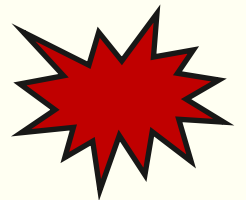
3. Public Policy Engagement

Participation in government-led consultations

Engagement in public dialogue on current events/ issues

Check out WEC's blog!

This blog offers posts, articles, commentaries, WEC policy statements and positions, photos, news clippings, and much more! The blog's URL is www.wecnl.ca/wec-blog.



How to become a WEC member (and how to encourage friends to become members)

Becoming a member is a fabulous first step to becoming environmentally involved in your local community! As a member, you'll receive the WEC newsletter, updates on WEC events, and free entrance to WEC workshops. Please contact Katie Temple at info@wecnl.ca (the annual membership fee is \$15.00).

Board of Directors

Glen Keeling.....Chair

Simon Jansen.....Vice-Chair

Stephen Blackwood.....Treasurer

Edwin Bezzina.....Newsletter Coordinator; Secretary

Stephanie Buckle Marcia Huyer

Mervyn Dean Heidi Janes

Annette George Rebecca Shea

Jeri Graham Roza Tchoukaleyska

Katie Temple.....Executive Director

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 and workshops
4. Become a WEC volunteer
5. Participate in the WEC community garden

Welcome to WEC's Newest Board Member!

Stephanie Buckle has twenty-five years of experience working with community partners to support and enhance healthy eating through food skill development, education, and awareness. Stephanie strives to intertwine her love of food and healthy living in a way that ignites a spark in others to enjoy healthy foods. Stephanie has successfully partnered with WEC in the past on various projects related to food skill development. She is an avid although not always successful gardener. She looks forward to working with the Western Environment Centre Board.

A Good Season for the Humber Valley Fruit Rescue Program!

The Humber Valley Fruit Rescue Project (HVFRP) was designed to utilize fruit on private land, fruit that would otherwise have been wasted. Volunteer pickers harvest fruit and share it three ways: 1/3 to pickers, 1/3 to homeowners, and 1/3 to not-for-profit organizations.

Since its inception in 2017, the HVFRP has rescued nearly 1,000lbs of fruit that would have been otherwise wasted. Raspberries, apples, cherries, and pears were picked and distributed to places like the Pasadena Food Bank, the 50+ Club in Benoit's Cove, the Pasadena Healthy Baby Club, and sold as a fundraiser for the Western Environment Centre.

The project is still underway this season and continues to rescue primarily apples. Unfortunately, because of COVID-19 this year the picked fruit is not being shared with other organizations, but we look forward to continuing next season with donations.

There are many people to thank for their time and support. Twenty homeowners, some of whom we have visited every season, have graciously welcomed us onto their property to harvest; and a core group of volunteer pickers are always ready to pick. Funding in part for this endeavour has come from the Community Healthy Living Fund.

Becky Shea



Good News for Drivers of Electric Cars!

Last July, the Newfoundland Labrador Government received \$770,000 in federal funding to start construction of a 14-station network of fast-charging stations across the island along the TransCanada Highway. The network should be completed by the end of 2020. The federal funding was met by almost 1.3 million in provincial funding. This initiative will remove a major barrier to the adoption of electric vehicles in this province. Kudos to all those involved!

For more information, see the following websites:

<https://electricautonomy.ca/2020/07/15/newfoundland-ev-charging-network/>

<https://nlhydro.com/electricvehicles/>



Great success for New community Gardens in Corner Brook!



In June 2020, the Western Environment Centre opened the registration process for two brand new community gardens in Corner Brook. Within a day, all 30 plots had been spoken for and many budding gardeners were delighted to now have the opportunity to try their hand at a new skill. Within a couple of months, the garden beds were full to overflowing with tomatoes, kale, lettuce, beets, carrots, cucumber, zucchini, pumpkin, peas, beans, turnips and more. Needless to say, all involved were more than happy with the results of their labour.



Volunteers help out at the Caribou Road site

The behind-the-scenes work for these two new gardens actually started more than a year in advance. Discussions between the Western Environment Centre and the City of Corner Brook began in early 2019, as all involved looked for potential locations suitable for growing, investigated funding sources, discussed infrastructure needs such as sheds, watering systems, and raised beds, and considered various garden designs.

By early 2020, a number of locations had been identified and a \$20,000 investment had been secured from the federal government's Local Food Infrastructure

Fund. The sites chosen are the East Valley Road park, a lot at the corner of Caribou Road and Bliss Street, and a site off Bartlett's Avenue in Curling. Once work started on the gardens, partners quickly realized that the initial focus should be on the Caribou Road and East Valley sites, since the community demand was much higher for those areas. A community garden for Curling is still in the works, and it will most likely be built in 2021.



The finished garden at the East Valley site

Despite a number of delays caused by pandemic concerns in early spring, community garden planning was able to continue. A consultation process was held in May, and with overwhelmingly positive support from the community, in early summer 2020 the project partners were excited to be able to offer a wonderful gardening opportunity to over thirty families, individuals, couples, students and community groups.

On Saturday, September 19th, the grand opening was held for the new gardens, and over 30 community members joined project partners to celebrate the success of the previous growing season. Despite a few small bumps along the way, the gardens have been a very positive community engagement project. By bringing neighbours together to learn and grow in a shared public space, they are helping to build a stronger, healthier, and safer community.



The fruit of their labour

For more info about any of WEC's community gardens or other community food projects, please send me an e-mail at info@wecnl.ca

Katie Temple

photos K. Temple

Climate Change and COVID-19

The world came to a grinding halt in March of this year. City streets were empty, airports void of travelers, and the skies over many smog-polluted cities were clear for the first time in a very long time.

Governments all over the world slowed down their economies, released trillions of dollars to aid people and businesses, and quickly put policies in place to help stop the spread of this virus.

In all the years of working on climate change projects, it has always been argued by people, politicians, and businesses that society can't change so quickly and economies can't adapt so quickly. And, climate change activists would continue to dream of politicians who would be brave enough to act swiftly and decisively in order to steer humanity away from the catastrophic effects of climate change.



Fire-fighting helicopter using a water bucket tries to douse a wildfire in California; the fires are linked to climate change (Shutterstock image 1810018291)

The last few months have shown us what is possible, though: the entire world can change in only a few short months; but also, governments **can** act swiftly in the interests of humanity.

The transition to an environmentally sustainable future is not easy. Nobody is saying that it is. But it is possible and it is necessary. And those are two things that COVID-19 and climate change have in common: Change is possible and change is necessary. In times of chaos and restructuring there is opportunity for a new tomorrow. But there are also interest groups who will try to use that same state of chaos and forced restructuring in order to implement policies that are not in the interest of the people nor the planet.

Hundreds of organizations across the country are calling for a **just** recovery based on the principles:

- put people's health and well-being first, no exceptions
- strengthen the social safety net and provide relief directly to people
- prioritize the needs of workers and communities
- build resilience to prevent future crises
- build solidarity and equity across communities, generations, and borders
- Uphold Indigenous rights and work in partnership with Indigenous Peoples

Climate change is not even a "future crisis"; it is very much a **current** crisis. And we need to encourage the measures that help carbon reductions to become permanent, while ensuring that progress continues in areas that were disrupted during the COVID-19 crisis.

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Devastation caused by the Alameda Wildfire in the western U.S. (Shutterstock image 1815611069)

Climate Change and COVID-19 *(continued from the previous page)*

I call upon governments to do the following:

- to ensure that international climate negotiations continue
- to protect budgets that were allocated for climate change-related projects from being repurposed
- to protect environmental assessment policies from being suspended or amended in the guise of speeding up an economic recovery
- to encourage people to work from home using video-conferencing for meetings; or if people have to go to their workplace to get there by bicycle, public transit, or on foot
- to safeguard, fund, and support our public transit systems during this time, as people opt instead to stay home or use cars in order to maintain their physical distance

COVID actually offers our society opportunities, namely:

- to rebuild our economies to make them greener and more sustainable
- to discontinue financial support for harmful, polluting industries such as oil and gas
- to finance green tech start-up initiatives and companies
- to finance re-training programs for displaced workers to transition to sustainable industries
- to demand that companies asking for government support be required to put in place measures to reduce their carbon footprint dramatically

These are not pipe dreams. Other countries are seizing these opportunities. According to Renée Cho of the Earth Institute at Columbia University,

The European Commission, the executive branch of the European Union, has put forth the world's greenest stimulus plan — a 750 billion euro (\$CAD 1.17 trillion) economic recovery plan with the goal for the EU to be carbon neutral by 2050. Germany's \$145 billion stimulus plan devotes about one third of its funds to public transportation, electric vehicles, and renewable energy, with no money provided for combustion engine vehicles. The government is also driving down the cost of clean energy, increasing research and development of green hydrogen, and investing in more sustainable agriculture and forest management as well as initiatives to decrease shipping and airlines emissions.

Let's hope that this momentum encourages other countries like Canada to be brave enough to follow suit.

This is a time of change and but also a time of opportunities. The COVID pandemic has shown us that the entire world can change in only a few short months and that governments can act swiftly in the interests of humanity. Let's make sure that governments do it in the interest of fighting climate change as well.

Simon Jansen

The Benefits of Walking

I often feel intrusive and condescending giving people advice on how to improve their lives, their personal health, and their approach to the environment, especially in the disruption caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic. Still, I would like to share some thoughts about how I developed a love of walking and how over the years I have derived multiple benefits from it. I am speaking not only of leisure-walking but also of relying less on the automobile and using one's two feet to walk to work, to run errands, to go to social events, and the like. Changing one's lifestyle to contribute to a better ecological future for all of us requires a strong sense of civic responsibility and duty, to be sure, but this imperative can be made easier to embrace by the fact that the lifestyle change can benefit each of us and our community substantially. Lowering one's carbon footprint does not have to be solely about self-sacrifice but also can bestow upon the person a greater degree of personal health, longevity, and well-being.

"People are pedestrians by design!" (WalkDenver website)

Just before I moved to Corner Brook in 2006, I purchased a car because I reasoned that it would be necessary for getting around town and that the distances were too great to cover on foot. Corner Brook is also full of hills! However, my landlord encouraged me to give walking to work a try; at first, I thought that it would take too long and the prospect of trudging up that big hill to campus seemed distinctly unappealing. I tried it anyway, and much to my surprise it took only eighteen minutes to get to work on foot and that it also put a bit of wind in my sails when I arrived. I then also began to walk to downtown Corner Brook, to friends' homes, to the coffee shop. About a year ago, I took this a step further. Taking a cue from my very healthy octogenarian neighbour across the street, I decided to try walking even more frequently to determine how that would improve my health.

By the end of this past winter, the benefits that I started to feel seemed to confirm what has been reported through various studies on walking and personal health. I could feel that my immune system had strengthened over the past year and that I was not fighting off sniffles or a worrisome tingling sensation in the throat as often as before. According to the Heart and Stroke Foundation, physical activity and particularly walking can help strengthen the immune system, not to mention reduce the risk of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, certain types of cancer, and obesity. Moreover, walking is gentle on the joints, particularly for those who find jogging or tennis too hard on the back and knees.

Walking to work can also make a person more energetic and dynamic in the workplace, because walking releases endorphins into the body and promotes blood circulation and mental agility. This is especially true if you can chart a route that cuts through a nature park; in that way, you would receive to some degree what the Japanese call *shinrin-yoku*, a "forest bath" (trees apparently release a chemical called phytoncides, which helps boost one's immune system). Relieving you of the need to deal with traffic, walking helps you process your thoughts and think more clearly; likewise, the walk home can offer a welcome opportunity to decompress. As such, walk-commuting can form part of a program to build self-confidence and keep depression or work-related stress at bay.

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Walk-commuting through Bowater Park

The Benefits of Walking *(continued from the previous page)*



The walk to work through Corner Brook side streets

When you walk more, you feel more a part of your community. You notice things about it that you would not if you were behind a wheel; you speak with neighbours, run into friends and colleagues along the way, and you help make your community become more personable. In big cities, heavy traffic and congestion create an impression of anonymity and congestion.

Walking more frequently will instill in you the sense of being a part of the solution to climate change. David Suzuki writes, “Canadians and Americans produce about six tons of carbon dioxide per person in transport emissions, three times the European average. [...] Driving and flying contribute the most to the aver-

age ecological footprint of people throughout the industrialized world” (Suzuki, 2008, pp. 72-73). Indeed, personal transportation is a major contributor to climate change. It is not merely from the carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, nitrous oxides and hydrocarbons that spew out of our tailpipes; it is also the energy now required to extract, refine, and transport oil and gas, an elaborate, expensive process that makes its own significant contribution to climate change. A bit of eco-guilt never hurt anybody, but the pill is made easier to swallow by the fact that walking instead of driving will reduce your monthly gas bill. When I took my walking endeavours to a higher level a year ago, my monthly gas bill dropped by half down to about \$30-40. These are not huge savings, admittedly, but it is always nice to have a bit of extra cash on hand.

Maintaining a good walking program all year has its challenges. Drivers are generally polite here, even chivalric. But walking in winter can be perilous and there is a reason why Corner Brook has a reputation for being one of the snowiest cities in the country. Sometimes with a little hop, I can step and dance my way out of an icy slip like Fred Astaire at his prime; occasionally, I fall on my behind. Residential sidewalks are generally not plowed in Corner Brook and, although City Hall has made strides in making Corner Brook more pedestrian-friendly, there is currently no bylaw requiring homeowners to keep their sidewalks clear. It is one of my very few pet peeves about Corner Brook that homeowners are not required to shovel their sidewalks. I always believed that sidewalk-shoveling is a necessary part of home ownership, like mowing the lawn. In cities like Edmonton, homeowners are fined if they do not shovel their snow. Of course, Corner Brook receives about three times the amount of snowfall per year as Edmonton, so it is a challenge to keep up with it. But perhaps it is doable, if neighbour helps neighbour, if high school students volunteer to help those who are unable to clear their sidewalks? And, there is no denying the fact that not everyone in Corner Brook can afford a car; when we refuse to shovel our sidewalks, we force these people to walk on the road and that puts them in danger. For my part, I actually like walking in winter; there is something about winter winds, cold temperatures, and the crisp fresh air that I find invigorating.

“With close to one vehicle for every two Canadians, we have one of the highest ratios of car ownership in the world.” (Government of Canada, “Why Reduce Our Fuel Use?” <https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/energy/efficiency/communities-infrastructure/transportation/idling/4461>)

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The Benefits of Walking *(continued from the previous page)*

There are, however, steps that we can take to make particularly a winter walk safer:

- Invest in a good footwear that is comfortable, light, and has excellent grip (or buy grippers for your shoes)
- Use a knapsack
- Even in winter, your body will generate much heat while walking, so choose clothing that is light, comfortable, and waterproof; stay away from dark colours like dark grey that make you less visible
- Depending on your walk, you might need a change of clothes at your destination (I take my car into work two days per week for heavy errands like grocery-shopping afterwards; but I bring along with me a change of clothes to store in the office)
- Try to choose the safest route possible, through a park or through side streets; start with a short, easy route to give your body a chance to adapt
- One does tend to let the mind wander while walking, but always remain aware of your surroundings and any potential traffic; and
- You have to develop a plan that works for you.



A knapsack, good shoes, and a rechargeable red light for evening walking

Part of the reason why we are not making real progress in fighting climate change is that the bulk of the population associates lowering one's carbon footprint with unacceptable sacrifices. But that does not have to be the case. If we think outside the box and imagine a different lifestyle, if we muster the intelligence and courage to make that change happen, we can derive enormous benefits from it and feel better about ourselves.

Resources

Suzuki, David, David R. Boyd. *David Suzuki's Green Guide*. David Suzuki Foundation. Greystone Books, 2008.

Vasil, Adria. *Ecoholic: Your Guide to the Most Environmentally Friendly Products, Information and Services in Canada*. Vintage Canada, 2007.

Canada Walks (A Department of Green Communities Canada) www.canadawalks.ca

As a website, this is good place to start because it offers a wonderful overview of the benefits of walking and suggests ways to make your community more pedestrian-friendly.

BEST (Better Environmentally Sound Transportation), British Columbia

www.best.bc.ca/storiesandnews/the-environmental-benefits-of-walking-3-reasons-to-walk-more

This British Columbia site has important links to scientific articles on walking.

The International Charter for Walking www.measuring-walking.org/resources/international-charter-for-walking

Based on input from experts around the world, this is a global endeavour to improve walking culture in communities and provides a framework to help authorities implement policies in that regard. A number of communities in Ontario have signed the Charter.

Walk and Bike for Life (8 80 Cities) www.walkandbikeforlife.org

This organization is based on the idea that "if everything we do in our cities is great for an 8-year-old and an 80-year-old, then it is great for all people." The website provides particularly useful links, advice, and suggestions for how to promote cycling and walking in your locality.

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 in Corner Brook, visit <http://www.cornerbrook.com/default.asp?mn=1.24.100> or phone their recycling line at (709) 637-1630.



News about the WEC Website!

We've redesigned and reinvigorated our website over the past few months, and are excited to be launching the new site soon. Featuring stunning landscape photos from across the west coast by local photographer Tom Cochrane, we wanted to create an online presence that reflected WEC's purpose and initiatives in a beautiful, modern way. We've also aimed at telling WEC's story throughout the site, and hope our members see themselves and their reasons for environmental stewardship in our mission.

Check out the wonderful website of the David Suzuki Foundation!

The David Suzuki Foundation website not only showcases its well-researched scientific and policy endeavours, but also provides the environmentally conscious citizen with so many tips on how to make your life and your home more environmentally sustainable, how to get friends and family involved in nature, how to write a letter to the editor of a newspaper, how to protect wildlife, how to grow your own food, and so much more.

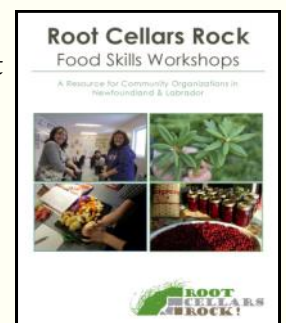
<https://david Suzuki.org/>



The Food Skills Workshop Kit!

The workshop kit is a free resource created by [Food First NL](http://www.foodfirstnl.ca) 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>





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GRENFELL CAMPUS | MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

The Green Drinks Speaker Series is on hold for the time being (due to the COVID-19 situation).



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.

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

Contact Sylvain Archambault e-mail: s.arch@me.com
cell (581) 995-4350

