



The Seed

Newsletter

The Western
Environment
Centre
wecnl.ca



In this issue....

- Indigenous people and the environment
- Repurposing tips
- Book recommendations
- EV charging stations
- Updates
- And much more!

Spring 2021

From the Editor's Desk

Given that it is spring, we decided to freshen up the newsletter and give it a logo! *The Seed*, designed by Leanna Butters, speaks to our community garden projects and on a broader level the idea of striving to implant ideas about environmental sustainability in western Newfoundland. The logo also makes me think of wind turbines, echoing the direction towards renewable energy that the world seems to be taking.

There is much in this newsletter that speaks to the theme of regeneration, new thinking, and new directions. Electrical vehicles are becoming increasingly feasible in this province, and Simon Jansen describes the network of recharging stations that is emerging on the TransCanada Highway and beyond. Becky Shea provides some wonderful ideas on repurposing items that we would otherwise throw in the garbage or in the recycling bin. All it takes is a bit of imagination and creativity. It is also encouraging to see children embracing a sustainable ethic; this issue introduces the notable contribution from a younger generation, depicted pictorially in Kids' Corner. The community gardens are in full swing and you will find in this issue some answers to frequently asked questions. We also printed the questions that WEC posed to the candidates in the last provincial election.

In the spirit of new thinking, we incorporated into this newsletter some Indigenous content on the meaning of reciprocity and interdependence between humans and the rest of the natural world. You can read about the enlightening nature walk that was led by Kevin Barnes, member of Qalipu First Nation and retired Mi'kmaq interpreter at Gros Morne National Park.

To complement this walk, I wrote a review of Robin Wall Kimmerer's book, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teaching of Plants* (another connection with our new logo!). :) The book is so filled with ideas and a different way of thinking that I found myself reconsidering some of my own fundamental assumptions and worldview. I was raised in a Western Christian mindset, which has a lot to recommend it, true, but a mindset that regrettably divides very sharply humans from all non-human living things. But what does it mean to regard, as Indigenous people do, a bird in the forest as a relative, or the earth as Mother Earth? You might think that birds like humans have souls or you might regard the concept of Mother Earth as just a metaphor. But even metaphors can be helpful if they change our thinking. The less we think of our planet as a commodity for our personal consumption, the better chance we have at a sustainable future. The more that we think of other living things as like us, the more we will value them and fight for their preservation.

Edwin Bezzina

Contact info

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 Have a look at our redesigned website!

Check us out on Facebook!



You can find us by searching 'WEC NL'

We're also on Twitter



(www.twitter.com/wecnl)

We welcome comments, questions, and submissions!



Feel free to write to the editor (Edwin Bezzina, ebezzina@grenfell.mun.ca)

cover photo: Showy Lady's Slipper (photo L. Butters)

WEC's Mandate

We're dedicated to engaging our community in food and climate action through impactful, educational initiatives.

WEC's Mission

Projects

We aim to initiate, manage, and run interactive community environmental projects.

Engagement

We're committed to engaging citizens in dialogue on environmental issues in a balanced and informed manner.

Community

We strive to help build a community of environmentally active citizens.

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).

We are excited to announce that **we are improving our member program** to help build a bigger, stronger environmental community in western NL! Member fees will stay the same (\$15/year), but we are bringing you some brand new services and resources. Members will continue to receive the newsletter and updates and will enjoy voting privileges at our AGM as well as free access to WEC workshops. Members also will receive access to:

- all workshop videos
- prize draws for eco-friendly products
- input into upcoming WEC projects
- first notification on jobs and volunteer opportunities
- the chance to take part in group-buying opportunities for products like seeds, sprouting supplies, and more
- a private members-only Facebook page where resources will be posted

Other new services or resources may also be added in future. All incoming and current members for 2021 will automatically get access to these services and resources.

Our annual fee is \$15 and can be paid by e-transfer to info@wecnl.ca or cheque/cash to 50 Main St, Corner Brook, NL A2H 1C4

If you have any questions, please email Katie Temple at info@wecnl.ca

Board of Directors

Glen Keeling.....Chair	Mervyn Dean	Jeri Graham
Simon Jansen.....Vice-Chair	Ryan Hughes	Marcia Huyer
Stephen Blackwood.....Treasurer	Lucas Knill	Rebecca Shea
Edwin Bezzina.....Newsletter Coordinator; Secretary		Roza Tchoukaleyska
<hr/>		
Katie Temple.....Executive Director	Leanna Butters.....	Newsletter Editorial Assistant

Welcome to Our New Board Members and Newsletter Editorial Assistant

Ryan Hughes is from Green Island Brook, on the Great Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland. He enjoys hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, fishing and gardening. Ryan completed a B.Sc. in Biochemistry at Memorial University and a Post Graduate Certificate from the School of Environment and Horticulture at Niagara College Canada. Ryan has worked as a research assistant, horticulture technician and a child and youth care worker. He enjoys talking to anyone (who will listen) about science, nature, climate change and sustainable food production. Ryan has worked in several cities in Canada, and has a diverse work experience. After wandering and exploring our beautiful country, he now plans to stay in Northern or Western Newfoundland and become a high school science teacher.



Lucas Knill hails from southern Ontario and has lived in Western Newfoundland since 2017. He is currently attending Grenfell Campus of Memorial University, completing his Master of Science degree in Boreal Ecosystems and Agriculture. Lucas is a strong believer in the value of being an active, contributing participant within communities. Values of community resilience, promoting rural economic development, and fostering community collaboration are of key importance for Lucas. He supports and believes that deliberative democracy is the best tool to bridge the social, environmental, and economic needs and issues of communities to real applied action. For environmental issues, and specifically climate change, Lucas believes that the time for communities and society to act is NOW.



Leanna Butters is from Toronto, Ontario but has lived in Newfoundland and Labrador for about five years. She is currently a Ph.D. student in the Transdisciplinary Sustainability program at Grenfell Campus, Memorial University. In her spare time, Leanna enjoys hiking, skiing, gardening, and canoeing.



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.

Other Great Ways to Get Involved in WEC

- *join one of the working committees*
- *join the Facebook group and invite others to do the same*
- *attend WEC events and workshops*
- *become a WEC volunteer*
- *participate in the WEC community garden*
- *attend the WEC AGM*

Kids' Corner

By Kai, age 7

Send your kids' environmentally themed art submissions to info@wecnl.ca and it may be featured in our next newsletter!



Living Sustainably: Why repurposing is better than recycling

Recycling has been the go-to environmental movement and focus of the three “R’s” through the years. While it’s great that we have found ways to break down our waste and create something else, the industrial process involved still requires a lot of energy. And that amount of energy is magnified when the material to be recycled has to be taken off of our island.

For those of us looking to care for the planet, we should go back to our roots when things weren’t easily replaced and dispensable. When items can no longer be used, we need to find ways to repurpose them; recycling should be our last option.

Why should recycling be our last resort? Repurposing and reusing are less expensive, require less energy, create less pollution, and refocuses our purchasing choices on quality over quantity. It’s the right thing to do, it brings out our creative mind, and it’s fun.

Here are some examples, from the very simple, everyday materials to larger more complicated projects:



Old toothbrush used to clean nooks and crannies around your house



Clamshell produce containers to start seeds indoors (be sure to put some holes in the bottom for drainage and keep the lid for the germination period)



Hot water tank turned into a greenhouse wood stove



Wadded-up onion sacs in place of scouring pads to clean dishes

Send us a picture of your repurposed projects to info@wecnl.ca for a chance to be featured in our next newsletter.

Rebecca Shea

Photos R. Shea

Walking and Talking with Kevin Barnes

I have had the privilege of living in western Newfoundland for several years now. Through hikes and time spent on ponds and rivers, I have found natural spaces that mean a lot to me. It has taken several years for me to develop these kinds of attachments. Having been raised in southern Ontario, the dense boreal forest was a big change from the places where I grew up and spent time. For me, understanding the local environment has been a process of meeting local people and learning about the places that are important to them. When I made those connections, beautiful experiences found me. The day I walked with Kevin Barnes was one of those experiences.

Edwin Bezzina, Kevin, and I met at Tipping’s Pond on a Saturday morning. The sun poked through the clouds on and off—a bit of warmth on what was an otherwise cold and windy Spring day. The trail was visible though obscured, at times, by low mounds of snow.

Kevin is member of Qalipu First Nation and of mixed European and Mi’kmaq ancestry. As we begin our walk, he tells us about his grandparents. “They never mentioned our Aboriginal heritage, but I learned from them how to treat Mother Earth.” His grandmother, for instance, taught him to pick only as many blueberries as they needed in a field of plenty. This was to ensure that those who came to the field after them would have enough to pick as well. To illustrate the value of this longer-term thinking, he asks us why we need to recycle. “Because we use too much,” he answers. If people thought about purchasing and using only what they need, the reuse of materials would become second nature and our waste, as a consequence, less of a problem.



Kevin demonstrating the healing properties of sap bubbles on a fir tree.



Reflecting the cycle of life, a tree decaying in the forest fertilizes the soil.

Kevin worked for many years as Mi’kmaq interpreter at Gros Morne National Park. Teaching respect for Mother Earth is something he loves to do. He speaks warmly about the children’s camps they would host at the Park and how well children took to Indigenous teachings about the environment. “If we are going to change the way people treat the environment, it has to start with teaching our children.”

I have walked Tipping’s Pond trail countless times, but this time Kevin pointed out details that I had overlooked: an old tree trunk, for instance, well into its decay and covered in moss, but with new branches poking up from underneath. He tells us that circles are very important for Indigenous people. Like the sun, rising in the east and setting in the west, life is cyclical. A log that is in decay is not without value—when left where it falls, it can give new life to plants and animals and help begin the cycle of life again. *(continued on the next page)*

Walking and Talking with Kevin Barnes *(continued from the previous page)*

Kevin shares that part of appreciating Mother Earth is also about understanding the gifts that nature provides. He picks out a fir tree just off the trail and points to the sap bubbles along its bark. He tells us that his grandmother used fir sap as a remedy for healing cuts.

Then, a short way up the trail, he shows us sap in the crevice of an injured spruce tree. With careful cultivation and warming, he tells us, this sap is like a natural chewing gum. He also points out creeping snowberry and Labrador tea, both of which make a delicious tea and are abundant in western Newfoundland. A fire starter that he often carries with him is another example. He tells us he made it using a gathered, dry pine branch and turpentine.

At the end of the walk, Kevin showed us more of his home-made fire starters: cotton pads dipped in candle wax and charcoal paper made from old denim. He told us that he never goes into the woods without some means of making a fire, both because he enjoys a boil-up and because it is important to be prepared in case you end up caught outdoors at night. His enjoyment of and reverence for the natural world is clear.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to explore Tipping's Pond with Kevin as our guide. The next time I go to Tipping's Pond alone, I plan to take my time. I want to reflect on the details Kevin revealed to us. I want to see if I can continue to explore these lessons that I feel I have been gifted. I am secure in my conviction that there is no better way to build appreciation for a place than to learn from the people who love it. Thank you, Kevin.

Leanna Butters



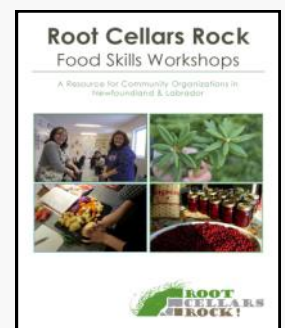
The sap in this injured spruce tree trunk can serve as a natural chewing gum.

Photos L. Butters

The Food Skills Workshop Kit!

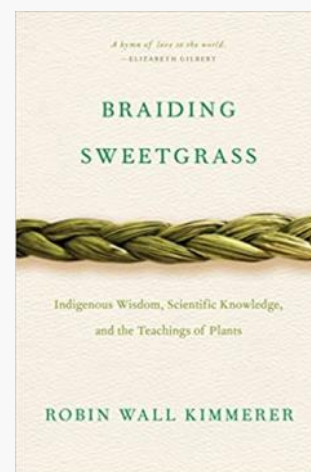
The workshop kit is a free resource created by [Food First NL](http://www.foodfirstnl.ca) designed to support community groups across the province with hosting hands-on workshops building local food skills and preserving traditional food knowledge. Topics include: container gardening; composting; edible 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>



Book Review: Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teaching of Plants* (Milkweed Editions, 2013). 390pp.; \$26.95 softcover.

Now here is a book that you will wholeheartedly enjoy! Robin Wall Kimmerer has given us a deeply engaging and beautifully written book. It blends Western science with Indigenous knowledge and wisdom to provide the kind of thinking needed to solve our ecological demise and to learn to love the land again. Wall Kimmerer is a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation with solid credentials behind her: botanist, Distinguished Teaching Professor of Environmental Biology at the State University of New York, and the founder and director of the Center for Native People and the Environment. Her other book of nature writing, *Gathering Moss*, won many accolades, and the book reviewed here is worthy of the same.



Sweetgrass, or *wiingaaashk* in Anishinaabe, is a fragrant plant of great importance to Indigenous peoples, regarded as the “sweet-smelling hair of Mother Earth.” It is a ceremonial plant, one of the four sacred plants of Wall Kimmerer’s people, indeed in their tradition the first plant to grow on Earth. Sweetgrass is also a practical plant because of its medicinal properties and its use in the weaving of baskets. On a broader level, sweetgrass is important for what it conveys in this book: the act of braiding sweetgrass involves more than one person and embodies a reciprocal almost emotional relationship between them and with the plant itself. That act of braiding is infused with feeling and compassion, in the same way that a grandmother braids her granddaughter’s hair. The braiding of sweetgrass echoes the interweaving in this book of Western science and Indigenous knowledge, offering an environmental ethic that comes from the heart.

The book is semi-autobiographical in that the author intertwines into the book her family’s history in the traumatic displacement and marginalization of her people by the United States government. This heritage has shaped Wall Kimmerer’s perspective, making her more determined to revive her Indigenous traditions and show Westerners what Indigenous wisdom and knowledge can teach them. The book is also semi-autobiographical through the author’s experiences as a young female academic in the sciences, struggling as a mother to raise her two children (eventually by herself, after her husband abandoned them), working against ingrained prejudices in the academic establishment that viewed women as too emotional and thus insufficiently objective to be scientists. We read and admire her insistence that scientific objectivity is still compatible with an emotional attachment to the land and all the living things that inhabit it. Indeed, she has inserted into her chapters scientific descriptions of plants that are accessible to the non-scientist but also awe-inspiring in the way that the intricate and wondrous design of the plant is presented.

The book might seem like a collection of disjointed essays, but there is an over-arching four-part structure. The first part, “Planting Sweetgrass,” takes us to origins and to fundamentals. We learn of the Indigenous beliefs of how life developed on earth, and most importantly the essential themes that those beliefs convey: Creation as a gift, a gift that requires reciprocity, respect, responsibilities, and a culture of gratitude.

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Book Review: Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*... (continued from the previous page)

Indigenous knowledge has a much more well-developed culture for teaching reciprocity and interdependence between all living things, and such ideas are intertwined in Indigenous beliefs, language, vocabulary, legends, lifestyles, practices, and worldviews, all invested with great emotional power that penetrates deep into their society. Animals and plants are regarded as non-human persons, not animate objects. Indeed, they are the relatives of humans (not in a direct biological sense); humans, being the youngest addition to Creation, have much to learn from their older relations.

The second part, "Picking Sweetgrass," develops these foundational ideas further, focusing on the Honourable Harvest. The wise harvester does not take more than what is needed; the wise harvester "asks permission" from the plant or animal and always gives something back. For example, how can one harvest sweetgrass in a way that enhances and encourages future growth? Welding Indigenous knowledge to western science, Wall Kimmerer and her students demonstrated that there must be sufficient harvesting or else the plants will not flourish, being thus forced to compete with too many other life forms for such essentials as water and sunlight. Basically, the key is to know the right amount to harvest without taking everything; every living thing has a purpose in life and every living thing gives and receives. The Anishinaabe name maple trees "the Standing People" who like good citizens provide ecological services to the community (shading homes, fertilizing the soil, sequestering carbon, offering sugar for maple syrup). Trees, like humans, have responsibilities and roles in this "democracy of species."

The third part, "Braiding Sweetgrass," takes the ideas of interdependence, reciprocity, and environmental responsibility to a higher level. In one chapter, Wall Kimmerer takes a group of evangelical Christian students on a three-day field trip in the Smoky Mountains in the southern United States. There, with great scientific detail she teaches them to "recognize and respond to the world as a gift." Astounded by such a demonstration of the harmony of the natural world, the students at the end of the trip break out in a chorus of *Amazing Grace*. In another chapter, we learn of how "heart-driven scientists" well versed in Western empiricism and the Scientific Method help to restore a salmon river on the Pacific Coast, arriving at a truth that Indigenous peoples have known for a long time: salmon cannot be treated like commodities; salmon can be caught for human consumption, but only sustainably and in a way that shows respect for their right to exist.

There is a strong tone of warning in the last part, "Burning Sweetgrass," as Wall Kimmerer links emerging climate catastrophes with Western over-consumption, reliance on fossil fuels, and a fundamentally erroneous understanding of the relationship between humans and the rest of the natural world. We over-consume, but we are never satiated. Yet, the title of this section also carries a message of hope, a message to spur one to action, because "burning sweetgrass" is also part of Indigenous ceremonies. Ceremonies (and the pledges that they often contain) can help us remember our responsibilities, our reciprocity with our natural relatives, to imbue us with a better understanding of the land: land as teacher, healer, as a cornucopia of abundance that will last forever if used wisely; land as moral obligation. It is easy to despair and become indifferent in the face of the magnitude of environmental degradation, but Wall Kimmerer's book offers a way out, a way forward.

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Book Review: Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass...* (continued from the previous page)

As such, the work implicitly and explicitly offers advice for those who want a habitable world for their children. This advice is embedded in the book's broader principles, in the inspiring stories of people who struggled to clean up a lake or a marsh, and even in the specific tips offered (becoming a monthly donor for a conservation organization, refusing to buy bottled water, and so on). Wall Kimmerer is practical and realistic in her ideas; she knows that we cannot go back to being "hunter-gatherer" societies; concepts of private property are not going away anytime soon. However, maybe essentials like water should never be privatized; and although we might have title to a particular piece of land, we could regard our title as giving us not so much rights of pure possession to treat the land according to our whim, but more so a greater responsibility to pass on the land in a good state to the next occupier. Of course, she recognizes our need to "take life" for our sustenance, but we must do so sustainably and we must try to give something back, in reciprocity for these gifts. She is balanced in her perspective, documenting the harsh impact of Western industrialized society on the environment, but not condemning Western science and knowledge. Western science has given us a toolbox to study the natural world systematically and with precision. What Western science needs in order to have greater impact on the broader population are the more emotive concepts embedded in Indigenous knowledge and wisdom. The mind must work in tandem with the heart.

Those Indigenous concepts are not as far-fetched as they seem. We already regard our pets essentially as persons, with names and human-type pronouns, as members of the family with protective rights. If pets, why not animals in a forest, or trees? We are already discovering how for example trees "communicate" with each other, so admirably described in Peter Wohlleben's book *The Hidden Life of Trees*. If we learned to think emotively in some way of trees as our relatives or as non-human persons, or if even just metaphorically, we would regard them less as commodities, less as objects that we can use and even despoil as we wish. The Christian religion, which is foundational to Western culture, echoes Indigenous beliefs about the harmony of Creation. What the Christian religion lacks, and what Indigenous knowledge can provide, is a better and more profound awareness of what the responsibility of stewardship of Creation entails. That understanding is rooted in concepts of interdependence and reciprocity, but also of feeling; these concepts are effective spurs to conservationism, and they can imbue Westerners with a deeper understanding of what it means to exist and coexist in this remarkably beautiful natural world.

Edwin Bezzina

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://davidsuzuki.org/>

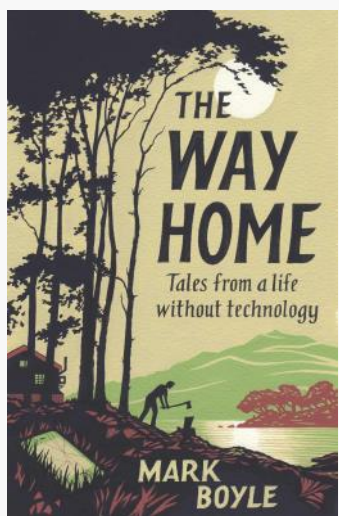


Newfoundland and Labrador Public Libraries Book Recommendations



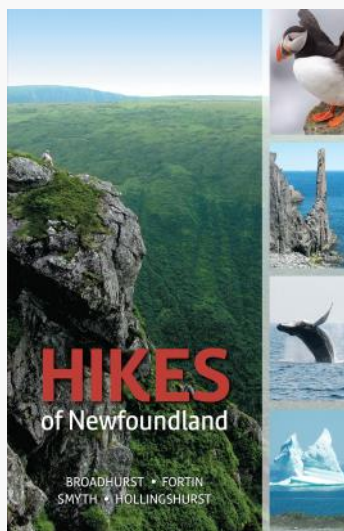
Forager's Dinner: Finding, harvesting, and preparing Newfoundland and Labrador's Edible Plants by Shawn Dawson

"This is a must-have book for anyone interested in food security, eating locally, and cooking with the freshest possible ingredients. Hundreds of full-colour photographs make *Forager's Dinner* a gorgeous and insightful journey into the natural bounty that surrounds us. Dawson also provides plenty of ideas for preparing and preserving what you pick. Also included are recipes featuring locally sourced wild food from more than a dozen of Newfoundland's best-known chefs." Dawson, Shawn. *Forager's Dinner: Finding, harvesting, and preparing Newfoundland and Labrador's Edible Plants*. Boulder Books, 2020. Horizon Library Catalogue (hip.nlpl.ca).



The Way Home: Tales from a life without technology by Mark Boyle

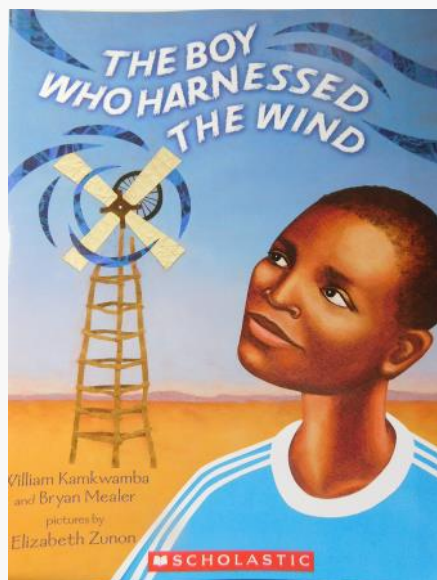
"In this honest and lyrical account of a remarkable life without modern technology, Mark Boyle explores the hard-won joys of building a home with his bare hands, learning to make fire, collecting water from the spring, foraging and fishing. What he finds is an elemental life, one governed by the rhythms of the sun and seasons, where life and death dance in a primal landscape of blood, wood, muck, water, and fire--much the same life we have lived for most of our time on earth. Revisiting it brings a deep insight into what it means to be human at a time when the boundaries between man and machine are blurring." Boyle, Mark. *The Way Home: Tales from a life without technology*. One World, 2019. Horizon Library Catalogue (hip.nlpl.ca)



Hikes of Newfoundland by Katie Broadhurst, Anne Alexandra Fortin, Mary Smyth, Fred Hollingshurst

"From a former Viking settlement on the Northern Peninsula to the award-winning paths that make up East Coast Trail on the Avalon Peninsula, *Hikes of Newfoundland* is a must-have guide to the must-do walks and hikes for those who wish to explore this unique, historic island. Suitable for hikers of all levels, this book offers an overview of over 150 trails, including length, elevation, and difficulty rating, and tips on what to watch for along the way. Maps and GPS references will get you to the trailhead; full-colour photographs will get you excited about the path ahead." Broadhurst, Katie, et al. *Hikes of Newfoundland*. Boulder Books, 2020. Horizon Library Catalogue (hip.nlpl.ca).

Newfoundland and Labrador Public Libraries Book Recommendations (*continued from the previous page*)



The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind by William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer

“When 14-year-old William Kamkwamba's Malawi village was hit by a drought in 2001, everyone's crops began to fail. His family didn't have enough money for food, let alone school, so William spent his days in the library. He came across a book on windmills and figured out how to build a windmill that could bring electricity to his village. Everyone thought he was crazy but William persevered and managed to create a functioning windmill out of junkyard scraps. Several years later he figured out how to use the windmill for irrigation purposes.” Mealer, Bryan. *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*. Dial Books for Young Readers, 2012. Horizon Library Catalogue(hip.nlpl.ca).

To request a copy of a book, search the Library Catalogue at www.nlpl.ca or call/email your [local branch](#) . If the title is available on the eLibrary a direct link is provided. To register for a free library card visit getthecard.nlpl.ca.

Natasha Wells, Western Regional Librarian

Electric vehicle fast-charging stations are here!

Solutions to the climate crisis are diverse, specific to the location we live in, and often particular to our individual lifestyle. When it comes to buying an electric vehicle (EV) many people hesitate, pointing to the lack of charging stations as one of their main concerns in a province that spans large distances of wilderness between population centres.

Recently, Newfoundland & Labrador Hydro (Hydro) installed fast-charging stations from the Avalon Peninsula to Stephenville_ about every 70km, with one additional station in service in Rocky Harbour. Officials say that it won't be long before the network along the TCH is complete.

Last summer the federal government contributed \$770,000 to the project. The provincial government is kicking in \$1 million, and Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro is providing about \$500,000.

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Electric vehicle fast charging stations are here! *(continued from the previous page)*

While the motivation behind the project is surely as much economical as environmental (what better use for the power of Muskrat Falls is there?), the outcome remains the same. Residents from this province can now seriously consider buying electric vehicles.

And more charging stations are in the works. TakeCHARGE, a partnership between NL Hydro and Newfoundland Power, has nineteen more charging stations planned for areas of the province further away from the TCH, for example for various peninsulas and for Labrador. Individual businesses were able to apply to host a charging station at their location if they met the necessary criteria (see the link at the end of the article). According to NL Hydro's website, Level 2 chargers can give an electric vehicle enough power in about 15 minutes to travel 40 kilometres, but fast chargers – Level 3 – will charge an electric car battery sufficiently in 15 minutes to go 100 kilometres.

The cost of charging an electric vehicle is also cheaper than filling a car with gas. NL Hydro estimates the cost of charging at home to be about seven or eight dollars. The fast-charging stations cost \$15/hour, which would charge most electric vehicles fully.

The electric vehicle chargers in the first phase of the provincial network are made by ChargePoint. To use these chargers, you'll need to [sign up for a free ChargePoint account](#), and have a ChargePoint card or a mobile device with the ChargePoint app installed.

NL Hydro is also recommending that new users of EVs plan their long distance trips carefully. The range of your vehicle can be influenced by unexpected things, such as using continuous air conditioning or heating, very cold weather, and steep hills. Even with fast chargers located every 70 km on the TCH, it's important to think about your trip in advance so you can plan your stops along the way.

It's best to plan your route and mark where you will be stopping to re-charge. Before you hit the road, be sure to [check the status of chargers online or through the ChargePoint app](#). Visit TakeChargeNL.ca/EVs to find everything you need to know about going electric, and whether making the switch is right for you. *(continued on the next page)*



A charging station in Deer Lake
(photo K. Temple)

Electric vehicle fast charging stations are here! *(continued from the previous page)*

To find out more about the nineteen additional charging stations, see: <https://takechargenl.ca/evs/electric-vehicle-charging-station-host-application/>

Link to Charge Point account: <https://na.chargepoint.com/signup/profile>

Link to check the status of the charging stations: https://na.chargepoint.com/charge_point

Simon Jansen



NOTE: This project is contingent upon takeCHARGE receiving regulatory and funding approvals. If for any reason these approvals are not obtained, this project may be cancelled at any time. Image courtesy Newfoundland Power, Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro

Depictions of the Natural World in Indigenous Art

Terry Boland is a Retired Catholic priest, currently a broadcaster for Bay of Islands Radio (BOIR), and a local artist of Mi'kmaq ancestry who lives in Corner Brook. His work « Polar Bear » (acrylic on canvas, 2020) depicts a polar bear roaming the ice and sea short of the Great Northern Peninsula. One can see how the use of bright and vivid colours in Indigenous depictions of animals highlights their personality, individuality, and personhood!



Community Garden FAQs

1. What community gardens does the Western Environment Centre operate in Corner Brook and where are they located?

We run Blow Me Down Garden (off Lundrigan Drive near the cross country ski club), Heights Garden (in Brandon Municipal Playground off Batstone's Road), Reid Street Garden (in East Valley Road Playground) and Caribou Road Garden (on the corner of Bliss Street and Caribou Road).

2. How much does it cost to rent a plot?

Each plot costs \$35 in total to rent for one year, which includes the WEC member fee (\$15) and garden fee (\$20).

3. Who can rent a plot?

Plots are available for rent to any individual, family, group, organization or anyone else interested. One plot per garden is donated each year to a community group. Please email info@wecnl.ca for more info on donated plots. Only one plot per individual/family/group is permitted.

4. If I haven't rented a plot before, how can I rent one?

If you would like to rent a plot and have never done so before, please email info@wecnl.ca to get added to our email list. Each year, registration is done in late March for all gardeners who had a plot the previous year. Once this is complete, we know how many plots we have left for new gardeners. We then send an email announcement, and new gardeners can be added on a first come, first served basis.

5. Is there a waiting list for plots?

We keep a waiting list each year, but this does not carry over the following year. Anyone who is potentially interested in a plot must respond to the email announcement each spring.

6. What is provided with a plot rental, such as seeds, tools, and fertilizers?

Each rental entitles the gardener to use one plot, as well as all communal tools which are kept in the garden shed including wheelbarrows, shovels, rakes, small hand tools and so on. Gardeners may also use their own tools if they like. If funding is available, then seeds and fertilizers are also made available to gardeners. We will let gardeners know each year whether we can provide seeds, seedlings, fertilizers, or other materials.

7. How do gardeners access water for their plots?

Each garden has a different system for watering. At Blow Me Down there is a stream-fed hose which is attached in two different sections of the garden either for filling watering cans or direct watering from the hose itself. At the Heights Garden there is a rain barrel that gets filled regularly with municipal tap water connected to a nearby home. Gardeners fill their watering cans from the barrel.

(continued on the next page)

Community Garden FAQs *(continued from the previous page)*

Both the Caribou and Reid Gardens have similar systems in that they are connected to water from nearby homes, and gardeners can fill their watering cans from the hose or barrel. Other watering solutions such as a very large water storage container are also being considered to improve the watering system at the new gardens.

8. Are there compost facilities at the gardens?

The Blow Me Down Garden has multiple compost bins where gardeners can put their garden waste. The Heights Garden has one small composter that gardeners can use, and they are also welcome to put small amounts of garden waste in the three rotary bins that are part of the Heights Community Compost, which is located nearby. New larger bins are planned for the Heights Garden in the near future. Caribou Road and Reid Street Gardens will each be getting three large rotary compost bins as part of the new community compost programs starting in spring 2021. Gardeners will use these for their garden waste, and they will also be welcome to bring their household kitchen scraps. For more info, contact info@wecnl.ca



Matthew Sullivan, seen here with a very large romaine lettuce (photo courtesy Karen Gillingham)

9. What is the process for renting a plot?

If a gardener would like to rent a plot, then they must first read and sign the lease agreement which outlines all the rules and guidelines for each garden. The signed lease is then returned to WEC along with the fee of \$35 which can be paid by email money transfer to info@wecnl.ca or via cash/cheque to 50 Main Street, Corner Brook, NL A2H 1C4. Gardeners may then start using their plot as soon as the snow melts!

10. What types of fertilizers and pest management products are allowed to be used at the garden?

We encourage the use of natural and organic fertilizers so that a healthy soil ecosystem is developed in each garden bed. This is better for the garden as a whole, and will also contribute to better yields and reduced problems with pests such as slugs, caterpillars, etc.

Permitted soil amendments include compost, liquid fish fertilizers, seaweed, well-rotted manure such as chicken and sheep, blood meal, bonemeal, leaves, and other natural materials. These all provide important nutrients, contribute to healthy bacteria and fungi in the soil, and help build organic matter. Natural pest management products are allowed on a case by case basis. Please contact info@wecnl.ca if you have a pest problem. If you have any questions about a product you'd like to use, please email info@wecnl.ca

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Community Garden FAQs *(continued from the previous page)*

11. What precautions are being taken in light of the pandemic?

We are currently following current government guidelines including:

- Advising gardeners to stay home if they are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 (cough, fever)
- Encouraging gardeners to keep a distance of 2 metres from other gardeners

Because the situation is continuously changing, we will be updating our pandemic plan as needed. This will be sent to all gardeners in advance of the gardening season, and will be posted on social media.

12. What are the obligations of community gardeners?

Community gardeners are required to read and understand the rules and guidelines of the garden they are participating in, which are outlined in the lease agreements. Some of the main obligations include: attending at least one work party each year to help with communal tasks; ensuring that garden tools are cleaned and put away properly after use; and taking care of their plot for the whole season and assigning someone to look after it if they are away for a longer period of time.

Katie Temple

The Community Composting Project Expands!

Katie Temple, WEC's Executive Director, and Jim Parsons, Mayor of Corner Brook, stand in front of the new composters. Thanks are extended to the City of Corner Brook for funding this endeavour.



Environmental Questions to the Political Parties in the Last Provincial Election

In a provincial election which saw the three main parties not release platforms until just days before advanced voting, WEC decided to ask candidates questions about environmental issues and share the answers on our website for public consideration. We contacted every candidate in five western Newfoundland ridings. We received responses from only two candidates: Shane Snook (NL Alliance) and Kevin Alyward (Liberal Party). We also received party responses from the Liberals and the Progressive Conservatives. Despite our multiple requests, the NDP did not respond.



WEC had just sent a letter to the Premier urging quick and effective action on climate change and emphasizing the urgent need to transition away from oil and gas. We also signed a document advocating for a Just Recovery for our economy. Both the letter and the document are available on our website. Our questions related to the topics covered in our letter and the Just Recovery recommendations, and reading those will provide important background information.

While the election is over now, these questions will remain relevant. We all collectively have a role to play in holding elected representatives accountable for what they have proposed, and also to be critical of any of those proposed policies which we feel are misguided or inadequate for the future of our province and planet. As always, we encourage folks to use our questions as a starting point in crafting and posing their own. The questions are copied below. Please visit wecnl.ca for the full responses.

1. According to the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture, the province of Newfoundland and Labrador is only 15% self-sufficient in food production. Based on the most recent statistics available, our province had the second highest rate of food insecurity in Canada at 14.7% in 2018. The province aims to double food production by 2022. Recognizing that increasing commercial agriculture can have detrimental environmental impacts, what are your ideas for how we should do this in an ecologically responsible way?
2. Canada has obligations under the Paris Agreement to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 30% below 2005 levels by 2030. Canada also recently announced a commitment to reach net-zero emissions by 2050. Currently, the Government of NL supports the federal 2030 targets, as well as a regional Atlantic goal of 35-45% below 1990 levels. Do you support these commitments to GHG reductions? If so, what specific policy proposals will you support in order to enable the province to meet them in a planned and measurable manner?
3. The most recent available data shows that the oil and gas sector is responsible for 28% of all NL GHG emissions. There is no clear path to meet emissions goals while also increasing or even maintaining production. Considering the global transition towards a low carbon future, do you support the continued exploration of oil in Newfoundland's offshore? What are your specific ideas for transitioning the NL economy away from a dependence on fossil fuels? *(continued on the next page)*

Environmental Questions to the Political Parties in the Last Provincial Election

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4. The Western Environment Centre is a signatory of the Principles for a Just Recovery (<https://justrecoveryforall.ca/>), along with hundreds of other organizations. The document encompasses principles which put health and well-being first by strengthening the social safety net, prioritizing the needs of workers and communities, and building resilience and equity, while upholding Indigenous rights. What environmental policies do you propose to help support a just and sustainable recovery?

Glen Keeling

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

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