



# The Seed

Newsletter

The Western  
Environment  
Centre  
wecnl.ca



## In this issue...

- The benefits of enjoying the outdoors in winter
- Film and book recommendations
- Earthing
- And much more!

Winter 2022

## Editorial

Undoubtedly, winter brings many challenges: in terms of getting around, in terms of all the physical strain that snow removal can entail. In Western Newfoundland, winter can be long. The January upsurge in COVID cases and hospitalizations arguably has made winter more difficult this year, because we are less able to engage in social activities that soften winter's harshness.

However, one of the best ways to combat the blahs of winter is to embrace it. There are several articles in this newsletter that speak to the value of getting outdoors and enjoying winter. One need not engage just in high adrenaline sports, although the exhilaration and excitement of such sports is satisfying for in itself. There is something to be said, however, for the "slower" winter sports such as snowshoeing, hiking, or cross-country skiing. One does not have to worry as much about avoiding dangerous falls or collisions; thus one can more greatly appreciate and notice the sounds and synergies that nature can reveal. The direct contact with nature may be less directly tactile, different from the "earthing" that we can enjoy in the summer months; yet the connections are there, felt in the crisp winter air, in the snowflakes that land on our cheeks, in the sounds and movements of birds.

In fact, according to the Department of Health of the University of Pennsylvania, engaging in outdoor winter activities actually strengthens our autoimmune systems and leaves us less exposed to the germs that are more pervasive in indoor environments during the winter months. It is important to wear clothing that suits the outdoor activity; but you also will find that once in movement, the body tends to generate its own heat.

Statistically, this particular winter has had a higher degree of variability in terms of periods of intense rainfall. The increasingly noticeable variability certainly can be connected to the effects of climate change. According to the provincial government's own website, the overall temperature of western Newfoundland is predicted to increase by 2.5 degrees Celsius. That may not seem like a lot, but what it means in reality is that the winter temperature variations will reach more often into the plus 0° C range, which produces more winter rain. For that reason, just as engaging in winter outdoor activities can help us appreciate nature more, so too must we be cognizant of the current threats to nature. So too must we be willing to confront those threats and not accept their inevitability. That is why WEC continues to develop community gardens and composting projects in the community. That is why WEC has restarted the Green Drinks series, these informal discussions on various environmental topics, all with the intent of encouraging lively discussion and raising awareness.

Edwin Bezzina

## Contact info

(e) [info@wecnl.ca](mailto:info@wecnl.ca)  
 (p) (709) 640-1734  
 (w) [www.wecnl.ca](http://www.wecnl.ca)  
 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](http://www.twitter.com/wecnl))

## We welcome comments, questions, and submissions!



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

cover photo: Blow Me Down Ski Trails (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](mailto:info@wecnl.ca)

In addition to the newsletter, updates, voting privileges at the AGM, and free access to WEC workshops, WEC 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](mailto: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](mailto:info@wecnl.ca)

## Slow and Beautiful Ways to Enjoy Nature in Winter

I'm a downhill skier. For many years I spent as much time as I possibly could at Marble Mountain. Pretty much any time that I was not at the hill, my focus would be on getting back there as soon as I could. So when I injured myself then a mild winter and COVID restrictions kept the ski hill closed, I had no idea what to do with myself. Other winter activities like walking, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing all seemed like work to me and not nearly exhilarating enough to fill the gap. I was very wrong. However, for the first winter since I was a child, I rediscovered the joy of slowing things down. What became immediately apparent were the positive health benefit of being outdoors without repeatedly smashing my ageing body into moguls. Having found a discounted set of classic cross-country skis that could handle a few scrapes and a decent pair of used snowshoes, I set off exploring the area outside my backyard. There, I discovered a seemingly endless variety of trails right at my doorstep that I had no idea existed. In many communities, the local trail systems are developed and maintained by dedicated volunteers; these trails are becoming increasingly accessible as the volunteers work hard to share their passion for the outdoors and make multiple uses of the trails possible.



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Photo: Blow Me Down Trails (Photo E. Bezzina)

### Board of Directors

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## Slow and Beautiful Ways to Enjoy Nature in Winter *(continued from the previous page)*

I'd like to offer a few tips for anyone who is considering easing themselves into more winter activity.

1. You don't need to buy expensive new gear.
2. Stick to the popular, well-trodden paths at first, like the main Corner Brook Stream loops or Tip-pings Pond. The heavy use of these trails compacts the snow so that they are generally passable in regular winter footwear without the need for snowshoes. The easier it is to do something, the more likely I find myself doing it.
3. Get a decent headlamp. Days are much shorter than they are in the summer, so even if you get started in the daylight it is possible that you might need some light to get home. Evening snow-shoe excursions in a group can be enjoyable. In the summer it might seem strange to start an adventure in the dark, but think more about the time on the clock than the light in the sky. Remember batteries drain faster in the cold. I rely on my headlamp more than any other piece of gear except my boots, and the cost is comparatively low.
4. Don't compare yourself to what people are posting on Instagram, that fit friend you might have, or some benchmark you may have been able to handle when you were ten years younger. If you are having a good time, you're doing it right.
5. Consider joining a group in your community even if you prefer to go solo or not make any public posts. Facebook pages are the most common medium or finding such outdoors groups. Such pages are a great way to keep in the loop about outings and any issues regarding trails, etiquette, and so on. If you're interested in volunteering, this is generally the best way to find out.
6. While they are a great way to discover areas that you were not familiar with, winter trails often take different routes than what you might be familiar with in the summer and there are also far more of them. It is also easier to get disoriented without the same landmarks that you are familiar with. Apps like Strava or Trail Forks can provide information about routes for planning and can be used as a GPS during the adventure.
7. Practice the "Three T's" of wilderness safety: Trip Planning, Training, and Taking the Essentials. Check out [adventuresmart.ca](http://adventuresmart.ca) for more information. It only takes a few minutes of preparation to be safe.

Glen Keeling

## 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\*

## Renewing our Energy through Nature

“To ground is to pour your energies back into the earth and feel the warm calm of nature entering your body in exchange.” ~Unknown

On February 1, we are officially halfway between the Winter Solstice and Spring Equinox. It's this point that most people feel down, tired, lack energy and drive. Our activities are low and our comforting food consumption is

high, leaving us feeling blah! Besides the warm temperatures and long sunny days, what else are we missing in these cold, dark months? Our connection to nature, earthing or grounding, and renewing our energy through the earth.



What is earthing? Earthing or grounding means connecting to nature through barefooted walks on a beach, through the grass, a nature hike, or even while gardening. When we connect to the earth barefooted, free electrons are taken up into the body. These electrons could be referred to as nature's biggest antioxidants and they help neutralise excess but damaging free radicals that can lead to inflammation and disease in the body.<sup>1</sup> Evidence also suggests that earthing can improve sleep, reduce stress, and decrease body inflammation.<sup>2</sup> Earthing and gardening go hand in hand. The pleasure of digging into the soil to plant seeds, knowing the foods that each seed will produce, is similar to the impact that earthing can have on each of us.

So how do we connect to nature in the depths of the winter months?

- Get Outside!! Snowshoe, ski, and play in nature. Let the snowflakes fall on your cheeks. Walk into the woods and hug a living tree. Stargaze on a clear night. Make snow angels.
- Nourish yourself with locally grown root vegetables.
- Adopt a new plant! Swap cuttings with a friend or bring a new leafy friend home.
- Start a mini garden indoors; leafy greens and herbs make great window plants
- Do you have a greenhouse? Spend some time inside it organizing, prepping, tidying for the season to come.
- Start planning your gardens for the growing season!

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Image: <https://thetattooedbuddha.com/2017/11/09/the-benefits-of-walking-barefoot/>

## 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/>



There is something about cold, winter air that is the most refreshing of all the seasons. Stepping into the warm comfort of home after a refreshing day in nature is soul-filling and heart-warming! Before they give way to spring, get outside and enjoy the beauty of the winter months and a hot bowl of lamb stew made with local meats and veggies!

Yours In Wellness,

**Liz Combdon, N.D. ~ RHNP™ ~ E-RYT200**

Liz Combdon Wellness [www.lizcombdon.com](http://www.lizcombdon.com)

1. <https://www.barefoothealing.com.au/v/what-is-earthing/22>

2. <https://earthingcanada.ca/what-is-earthing/>

## Local Eats – a recipe for Lamb Stew to help you warm up in the winter months (try it with local produce!)

### Ingredients

5 cups Water  
 14 ozs Local Lamb Stew Meat  
 2 cups White Navy Beans (cooked)  
 1 Yellow Onion (medium, diced)  
 1 Yellow Potato (medium, diced)  
 2 Carrot (diced)  
 2 cups Diced Tomatoes (diced)  
 2 tsps Turmeric  
 2 tbsps Apple Cider Vinegar  
 1 tbsp Tomato Paste  
 2 tsps Sea Salt  
 1 tbsp Rosemary (1-2 sprigs)

### Directions

- 1 Add all ingredients to the slow cooker and set to high for 5 hours, or low for 8 hours.
- 2 Before serving shred the meat with a fork (if it hasn't fallen apart already). Enjoy!

### Notes

**Serve it With:** Toasted bread, biscuits, rice, quinoa or cauliflower rice.

**More Veggies:** Add watercress, kale or spinach before serving.

**No Potato:** Use cauliflower instead.

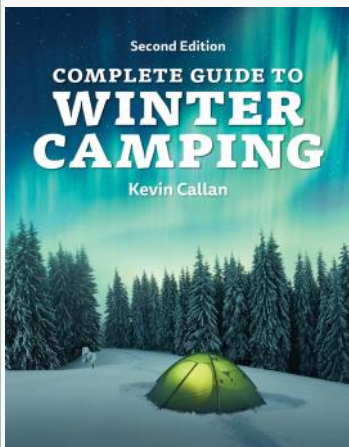
**Leftovers:** Store in an airtight container in the fridge up to 3 days. Freeze for up to 2 months.

**Vegan & Vegetarians:** Replace the lamb with chickpeas.



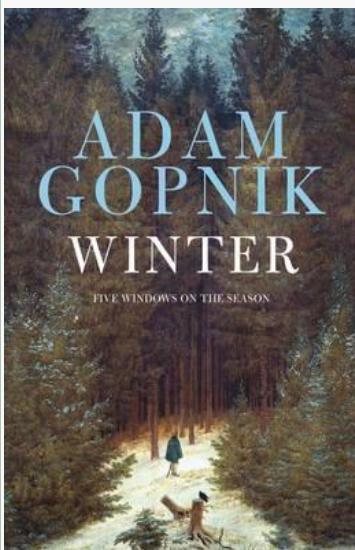
Tried out and found to be quite delicious by Leanna Butters, WEC's newsletter assistant (photo courtesy L. Butters)

## Newfoundland and Labrador Public Libraries Book Recommendations



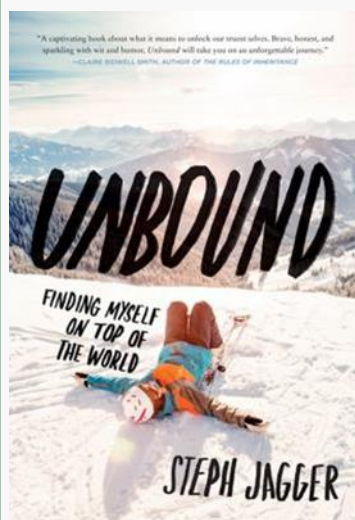
### *Complete Guide to Winter Camping* by Kevin Callan

“A comprehensive guide on how to stay safe and have fun while camping in winter, including information on "hot tenting" and "cold tenting.” Callan, Kevin. *Complete Guide to Winter Camping*. Firefly Book, 2021. Horizon Library Catalogue ([hip.nlpl.ca](http://hip.nlpl.ca)).



### *Winter: Five Windows on the Season* by Adam Gopnik

“Winter takes us on an intimate tour of the artists, poets, composers, writers, explorers, scientists and thinkers who helped shape a new and modern idea of winter.” Gopnik, Adam. *Winter: Five windows on the season*. House of Anansi Press, 2011. Horizon Library Catalogue ([hip.nlpl.ca](http://hip.nlpl.ca)).



### *Unbound: Finding myself on top of the world* by Steph Jagger

“Steph Jagger had seen the ski-lift sign thousands of times — “Raise Restraining Device,” it read — but one day she took it personally as a rallying cry to shake off the life she had for the life she wanted. She had always been a force of nature, so why was she still holding herself back? She was accomplished. She was living “The Dream.” But it wasn’t her dream. In a moment, the sign on the ski lift became her mantra, and she knew she had to change her life. So, Jagger walked away from the success and security she had worked long and hard to obtain. She quit her job, took a second mortgage on her house, sold everything except her ski equipment and her laptop, and bought a plane ticket. For the next year, she followed winter across five continents on a mission to break the world record for most vertical feet skied in a year. What hiking was for Cheryl Strayed, skiing became for Steph: a crucible in which to crack open her life, melt it down to its elements and get to the very centre of herself.” Jagger, Steph. *Unbound: Finding myself on top of the world*. HarperCollins Publishing, 2017. Horizon Library Catalogue ([hip.nlpl.ca](http://hip.nlpl.ca)).

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## Newfoundland and Labrador Public Libraries Book Recommendations

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### *Winter Sleep: A hibernation story* by Sean Taylor & Alex Morss

“Follow a child and his grandma through a winter landscape to explore how the Earth goes to sleep for winter. Spot the sleeping animals as the tale unfolds, then learn about their hibernation habits from the information pages at the end.” Taylor, Sean, and Alex Morss. *Winter Sleep: A hibernation story*. Happy Yak, 2021. Horizon Library Catalogue ([hip.nlpl.ca](http://hip.nlpl.ca)).

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

Natasha Wells, Western Division Manager

## Green Drinks is back!

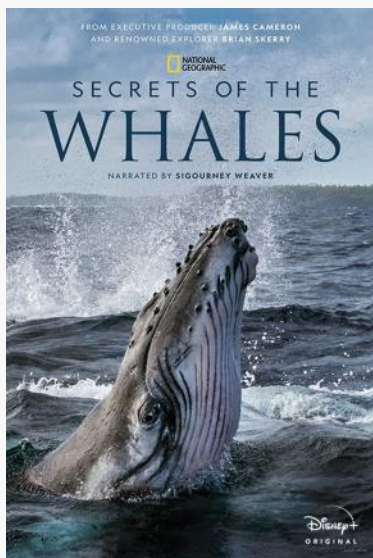
In January, WEC restarted the Green Drinks speaker series (virtually). There was a lively discussion on the question, “How Can Newfoundland Plan for a Fossil-Free Future?” Our speakers were Raymond Cusson, climate change community activist and organizer, and Dr. Angela Carter (Department of Political Science, University of Waterloo), author of *Fossilized: Environmental Policy in Canada’s Petro-Provinces* (UBC Press, 2020).



Both commentators noted that Newfoundland and Labrador are currently on the wrong track in terms of transitioning to a green economy. The clearest path to fighting climate change is through reducing fossil-fuel consumption and fossil-fuel extraction, oil in particular. In order to move this province away from oil extraction and production, investment needs to be redirected, personnel need to be retrained in renewable energy fields, and incentives need to be implemented. Luckily, much of the infrastructure for this is already available in other domains. Several ideas were shared by the speakers and by the attendees, such as examining successful public mobilization and divestment efforts elsewhere, like Ireland. There is much that can be done.

Stay tuned for more Green Drinks events in the future!

## Movie Recommendations

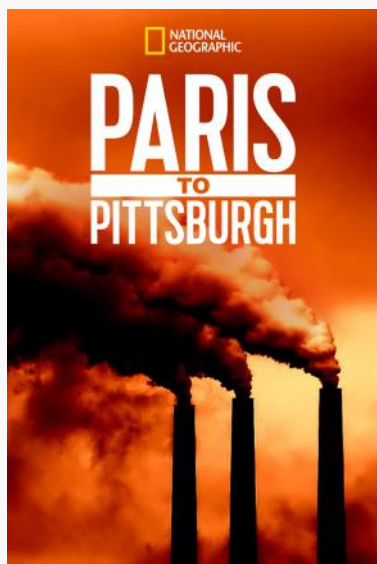


**Secrets of the Whales (2021).** Directed by Brian Armstrong and Andy Mitchell. Narrated by Sigourney Weaver. National Geographic; Red Rock Films. 3 hrs, 11 mins.

This new series explores whale language and love, shedding light on the complex lives of these extraordinary animals. Featuring the cultures of orcas, belugas, narwhals, sperm whales, and humpback whales, this documentary highlights the importance of family bonds for their survival.

**Into the Okavango (2018).** Directed by Neil Gelinas. Starring Chris Boyes. National Geographic Society. 1hr28mins.

This documentary film follows a conservation biologist, a river bushman, and an aspiring young scientist as they go on a 1500-mile-long expedition through Botswana, Angola, and Namibia. Their goal? To protect the Okavango River and its delta (a UNSECO World Heritage site) on which much wildlife relies. This film emphasizes importance of water for all life on our planet while providing an intimate look at the Okavango system.



**Paris to Pittsburgh (2018).** Directing by Sidney Beaumont and Michael Bonfiglio. Narrated by Rachel Brosnahan. Bloomberg Philanthropies; National Geographic; Radical Media. 1hr17mins.

Framed around the decision of the United States to withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement in 2017, this film speaks to the challenge of climate change for communities. It features passionate individuals who are working to combat climate change on a smaller scale and highlights the importance of intervention and adaptation more broadly.

## Community Garden Upgraded!

This past year, there were some valuable upgrades made to some of our community gardens, with the support of multiple partners and supporters. The biggest additions were the community compost programs that we implemented at the Reid Street and Caribou Road Gardens.

With support from the provincial Multi Materials Stewardship Board and the City of Corner Brook, we set up four large rotary compost bins at each of the sites. These programs make it super simple for people to compost! Anyone in each of the neighbourhoods can sign up and then simply drop off their kitchen scraps at their own convenience.

Volunteer committees then help maintain the bins and harvest the finished compost. This past fall, we were able to harvest hundreds of pounds of compost for our community garden plots. Some other positive changes made were at the Caribou Road Garden, as we continued our multi-phase plan to beautify that site and make it more accessible and user-friendly. In late summer we worked with the City of Corner

Brook and the Corner Brook Stream Trail to grade the site to even out the ground, provide some water runoff protection, and add robust landscape fabric and crushed stone all around the beds to make a smooth, safe and beautiful surface for gardeners to walk on and push wheelbarrows. We also had a wide parking area created to make a clear designation between the garden and the parking lot. More upgrades will happen at the Caribou Rd. garden in 2022, including the addition of some much needed greenery including sods and native bushes.

Our two other gardens, Heights and Blow Me Down, weren't left out either! We were able to improve the walkways at these gardens as well, since the work we did a couple years ago was already starting to deteriorate because of the incursion of weeds. This time we used stronger materials so, fingers crossed, this will hold up better over the years.

And, of course, at the end of the gardening season we had beautiful loads of compost delivered to each garden so that gardeners could start preparing their beds for a good start in the spring. This year, although our usual compost from Hi-Point Industries near Hughes Brook wasn't available, we found some high-quality compost from 3F Waste Recovery at Main Brook.

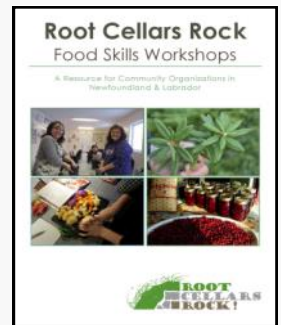
We look forward to more positive changes and another great gardening year in 2022!  
Katie Temple



A colourful plot at the Caribou Road garden  
(photo courtesy K. Temple)

## 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>



## 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.



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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](http://findyourcorner.ca)

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