

Ecology & Action

SPRING 2021

IN THIS ISSUE



Netukulimk: Finding Climate Solutions in Nature



Too Close to the Coast!



Quiet Streets, Community Voices: Keeping Nova Scotia Mobile



**Wondering why our cover is blank?
See the back cover for details on
our 50th Anniversary Cover Contest!**



Contents

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An Opportunity for Change: The Halifax Regional Plan 2

Voices on the Changing Seas 4

Netukulimk: Finding Climate Solutions in Nature ... 6

Ecological Fiction Inspires Action! 8

The Head, Hands and Heart of Sustainability 9

Quiet Streets, Community Voices: Keeping Nova Scotia Mobile 12

A Glimpse Under the Hood 13

Too Close to the Coast! 14

Re-imagining Intersections as Places for Reconnection 16

Action is our Middle Name 18

The Seasonal Gourmet 20



Ecology Action Centre

Printed at Halcraft Printers on Chorus Art Paper, 50% recycled fibre, 25% post-consumer with vegetable based inks.

Ecology & Action is published three times a year by the Ecology Action Centre (the EAC), a charitable organization (PM Registration # 40050204).

The Ecology Action Centre is a member-based environmental charity in Nova Scotia. We take leadership on critical environmental issues from biodiversity protection to climate change to environmental justice. We are grounded in community, and a strong voice and watchdog for our environment. We work to catalyze change through policy advocacy, community development and building awareness. We take a holistic approach to the environment and our economy to create a just and sustainable society. Views expressed in *Ecology & Action* are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent the EAC or its supporters.

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Letter from the Centre

WE LOVE HEARING FROM YOU! EMAIL YOUR THOUGHTS TO MAGAZINE@ECOLOGYACTION.CA

The first part of 2021 has been a time of reemergence. With the end of the pandemic finally coming into view, we continue to adapt as a society and learn new ways of taking care of ourselves, our communities, and the planet we call home. We do this even as we stare down the threats of an unstable climate, rising inequity, and the loss of Earth's biodiversity.

As we emerge from the COVID-19 crisis, we are building a new world – hopefully one that is kinder, more resilient, and more sustainable than the one we leave behind. The tools we use to build our new world are both innovative and rooted in the lessons of our past. Art, Indigenous knowledge, nature-based solutions, collective action and community care are all critical pieces of the systemic change we need. In Nova Scotia and all around the world, people are engaged in the act of imagining and reimagining ways of moving forward together.

This year EAC will celebrate our 50th anniversary. Informed by our past and grounded in our present, we too are envisioning our future and the next

half century of action for the environment. We're exploring themes of intergenerational activism and community building, while working on an exciting and epic story-telling collaboration. So, stay tuned!

This issue of *Ecology & Action* features examples of the creativity, innovation, and novel solutions that are helping us build new pathways. It also explores the wisdom of our past and how ancient knowledge can guide us into a brighter future.

With the tools we have both old and new, an equitable, sustainable future is possible. And the work to bring that future to life is happening all around us. We hope this issue allows you to dive into some of that inspiring work.

WHAT WILL YOUR LEGACY BE?

Leave a gift to the EAC in your will to ensure a healthy future for generations to come. Please call us at 902-448-9845 or email paula.aceto@ecologyaction.ca.



“The Ecology Action Centre is incredibly important to the environmental health of Nova Scotia and to the people who live here. Over the years it has built a reputation for integrity and unrivaled research and work on ecological issues. My gift, I hope, will ensure it continues this work for many, many years in the future.”

– Cliff White



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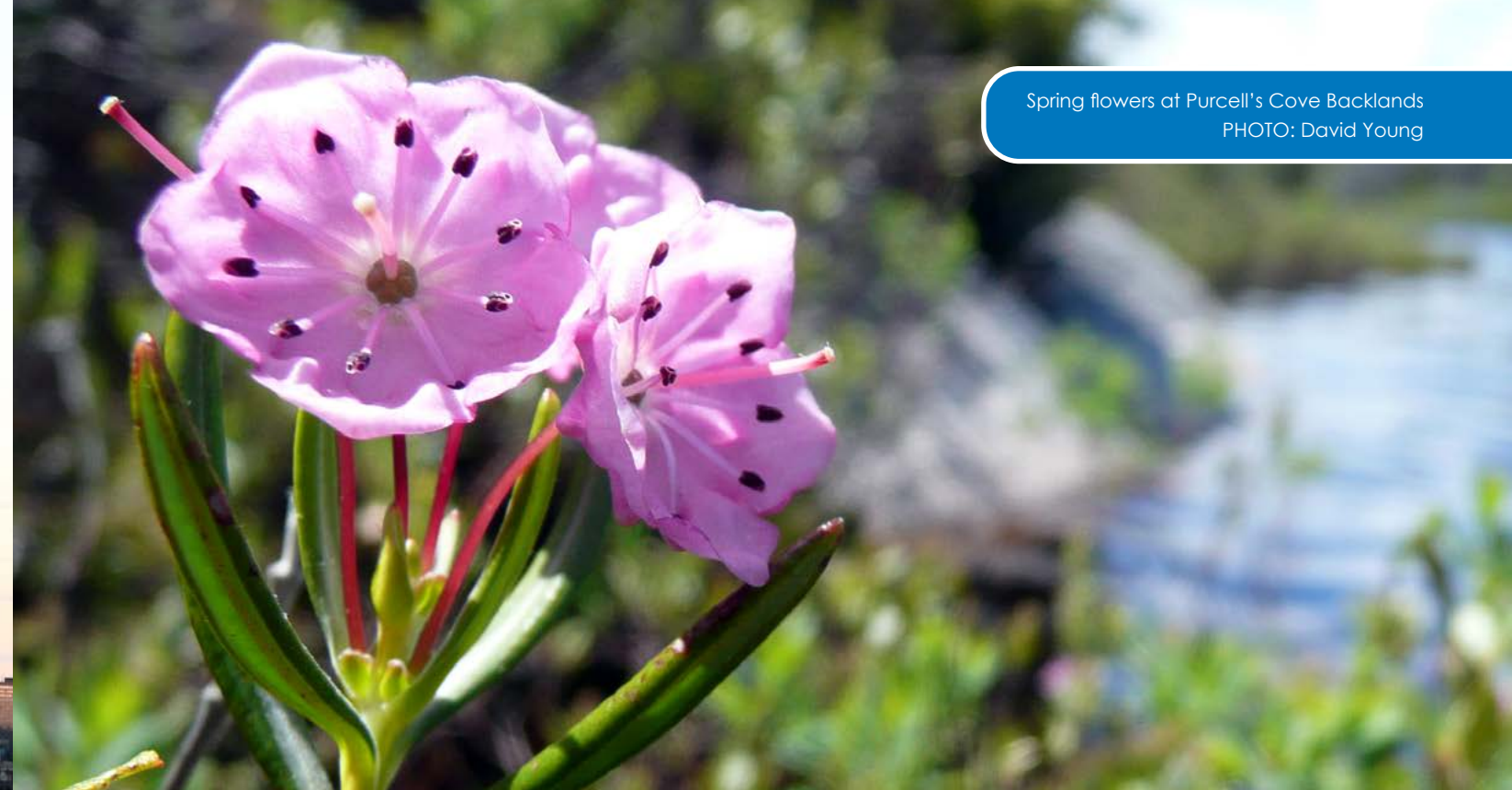
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An Opportunity for Change: The Halifax Regional Plan

by **SHAUN TRAINOR** /// EAC Volunteer

PHOTO: Claire Parsons

As Haligonians navigate the housing crisis, the realities of COVID-19 from accessibility to mental health, and the continued climate and ecological crises, we have the opportunity to ensure the municipality's Regional Plan reflects the needs and values of Haligonians. This is a unique opportunity to build a more sustainable, accessible, liveable, and equitable future for the municipality.



Spring flowers at Purcell's Cove Backlands
PHOTO: David Young

What is the Halifax Regional Plan?

The Halifax Regional Plan is HRM's highest-level planning document. It establishes the vision of HRM's growth and encompasses a number of policies and programs over a 25-year period ending in 2031. It establishes common policies for environment, housing, transportation, economy and governance. Among the many policies and programs, the Regional Plan has targets which dictate the percentage of growth in suburban, rural and urban areas as well as the decision to protect certain parks and greenspaces. Every 5-years, HRM is committed to reviewing the Regional Plan to ensure it is relevant and serving citizens. In 2020, we entered the 10-year review of the Plan.

Why does it matter?

The world is in a climate and ecological crisis – one that further exacerbates existing inequalities. To address this crisis, cities must focus on a just transition. The Regional Plan as it now stands will not enable Halifax to sufficiently address the climate and ecological crisis and climate injustices that are part and parcel of this crisis. We are in an emergency. We need bold action and a Regional Plan that offers a way towards a more sustainable, liveable, accessible and equitable municipality; a Halifax that truly reflects the needs and values of its citizens. The Regional Plan review is our opportunity to turn HRM's goals and visions into policy. **In this review, we could protect places like Sandy Lake and the Purcell's Cove Backlands, make development heed ecological corridors, solidify climate targets, and invest in age-friendly, affordable housing in communities that need it.**

How can you be involved?

Your engagement in the review is key to ensuring the Plan meets the needs of all Haligonians while addressing the climate and ecological crisis. The Halifax Green Network Plan was established during the last Regional Plan review thanks to the engagement of our EAC members and Our HRM Alliance. The Halifax Green Network Plan: User's Guide put together by Our HRM Alliance is an easy-to-read primer. It's specific to the Green Network Plan but has generally applicable info on municipal policy and urban planning.

TAKE ACTION

In the coming months there will be online community engagement and consultation meetings. This opportunity will allow citizens to have their voices, values, and visions heard. Keep an eye out on the municipal website and the Ecology Action Centre's social media accounts for more information and to participate during public consultation for the Regional Plan.

Shaun Trainor is a former Climate Justice student and current Psychology student, living in Nova Scotia, whose research focuses on the interconnections between climate change and mental health.

Voices on the Changing Seas

THE CHANGING OCEANS PROJECT

by **SIMON RYDER-BURBIDGE** /// EAC Staff

In understanding the implications of climate change beyond what we can see, getting to know the ocean represents arguably one of the greatest tests of human faculty to-date. Vast, cold and dark, we know less about the ocean floor in a scientific sense than we do about the surface of the moon, even with steady advancements in ocean technology allowing us to reach ever-further into the depths.

Yet, the ocean is an incredibly important place for us to know. Human societies are tied to the sea in ways we are only beginning to fully comprehend. At a global scale, seafood contributes a key source of protein for **more than four billion people**, and an estimated ten percent of the planet relies on the ocean for their primary livelihood. These numbers concentrate even further in coastal areas, where **more than 40 percent of the world** lives within 100 kilometres of the ocean.

Closer to home, the sea scoured lands of Mi'kma'ki and Atlantic Canada are no different. From the tidal estuaries and the sandstone cliffs of the Gulf of St. Lawrence to the rockscapes and sprawling, golden sands stretching for kilometres along the Atlantic coast, people dot the shoreline like pebbles on the beach in this part of the world. We live, work and play on the water. The sea is a fundamental partner in life. And that partnership makes understanding changes at sea critical for a future where coastal citizens can live well, where coastal cultures are cherished and safeguarded, and where coastal communities can thrive on the Northwest Atlantic.

Over the past decade, the Gulf of Maine has been warming faster than almost any other body of water on the planet. As we walk through an unprecedented era of climate change at sea, we want to explore what these changes mean for day-to-day life in coastal

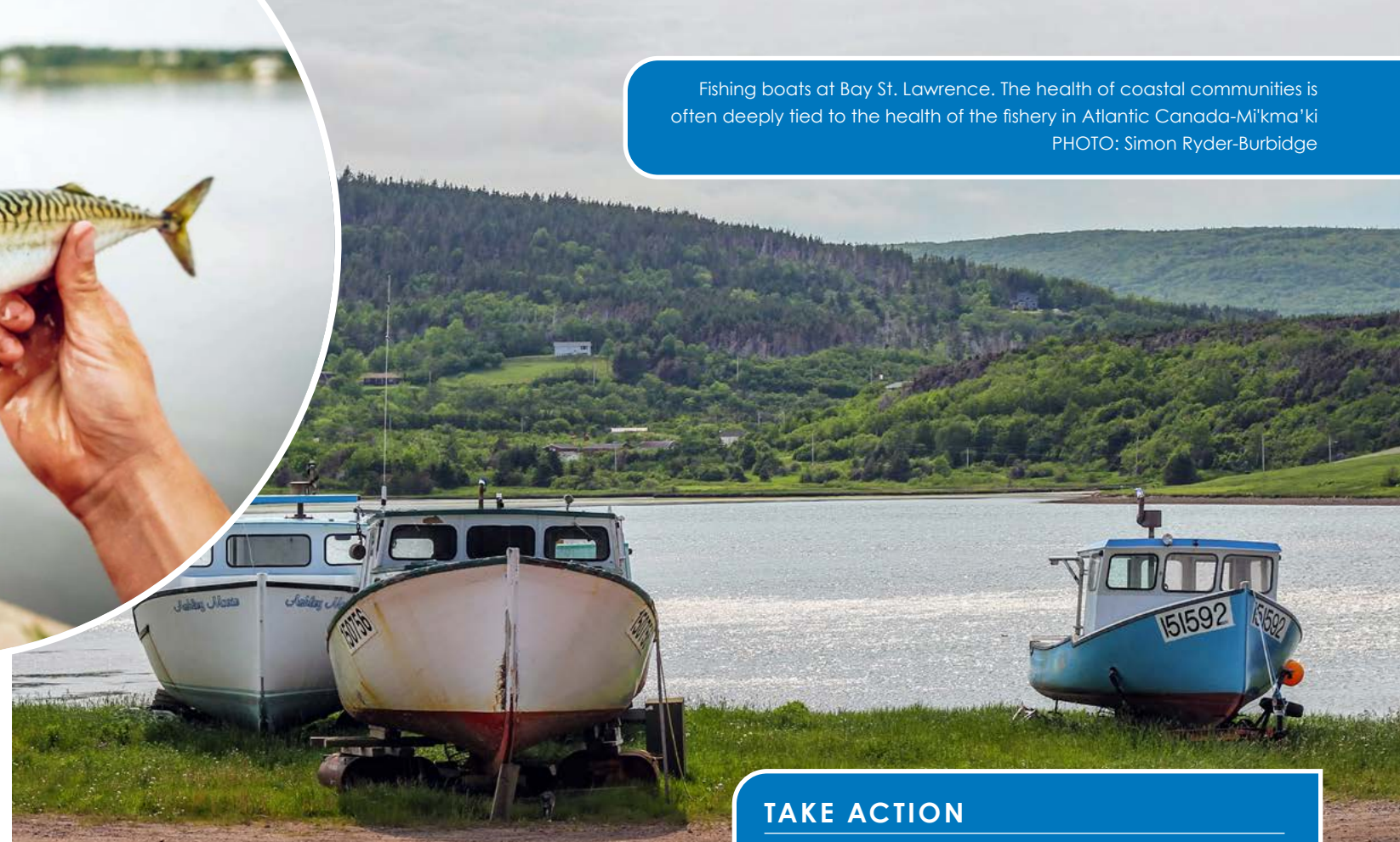
communities. How does a warming ocean affect the migration patterns of marine species, for instance? How do those migration patterns impact our capacity to fish? And what happens in the community when longstanding fishing practices are interrupted as a result?

With the Ecology Action Centre's **Changing Oceans Project**, we're wading into these ocean-sized questions with the help of knowledge-keepers, fishers, processors, scientists and community leaders. Steered by the people who know the sea best, we want to reimagine what our relationship with the ocean might look like as these shifts continue to intensify.

Bringing together a team of writers, designers, media-makers and localized coastal guides, the Changing Oceans Project relies on a multimedia storytelling approach to communicate stories of change from the people of the Northwest Atlantic. In developing this project, our first year presented a fantastic challenge understanding the dynamics of life and work in the seafood industry, delicately interwoven into the fabric of coastal societies. We continue to return to the importance of building relationships as the first step towards opening up space for people to speak candidly and tell their stories.



Atlantic mackerel
PHOTO: Mackenzie Sapier



Fishing boats at Bay St. Lawrence. The health of coastal communities is often deeply tied to the health of the fishery in Atlantic Canada-Mi'kma'ki
PHOTO: Simon Ryder-Burbidge



Lobster has become the fishery's most lucrative prize. But have we become too dependent on this celebrated crustacean? PHOTO: Scott Leslie

Our job now, after dozens of interviews ranging everywhere from declining catch rates to shifting markets trends to whale migrations to debt loads and skyrocketing price-points for lobster licences, is to bring these stories of experience at sea to new audiences. In the second year of the Changing Oceans Project, we want to share these *as-told-to-us* narratives from fishers, seafood workers, scientists and community leaders across regions, to understand the points of connection and the tales that resonate throughout life in Mi'kma'ki, Nova Scotia and beyond. Our hope in doing this is that we might begin to open up a new dialogue – or perhaps a very old dialogue – that goes beyond single species management. Beyond convoluted systems of regulation. Instead, we want to take a hard look at the connections between people and changing marine ecosystems at our doorstep.

TAKE ACTION

Stay tuned through the latter half of 2021 for ongoing updates and presentations from the EAC's Changing Oceans Project. There will be lots of opportunity to get involved. If this concept resonates with you, don't hesitate to get in touch with our Marine Team! We are keen to learn more about all the ways in which changing oceans impact your life or the lives of your loved ones. If you've got a story to tell, we want to hear it. In the meantime, clear skies and smooth sailing ahead!

If there is one thing we have learned so far in talking with the folks who lead their lives on the water, it is that change is constant, and that adaptation is tradition on the coast. Change is myriad and enormously complex at sea – the variable that can always be relied on from one day to the next and year after year. Trying to connect all the dots can be a dizzying exercise. Through the leadership, guidance and generosity of the saltiest among us, maybe we can bring together forms of knowledge and begin to see the ocean in new ways. Perhaps ways in which we will start to recognize our own, humble reflections again. Perhaps ways that will lead us towards a new path forward.

Simon Ryder-Burbidge is a Marine Conservation Campaigner with the Ecology Action Centre and a producer for the EAC's Changing Oceans Project.

Netukulimk: Finding Climate Solutions in Nature

by PAIGE CROWELL /// EAC Volunteer



Coastal Highway 960, Nova Scotia
PHOTO: Simon Ryder-Burbidge

Climate change is often termed a "wicked problem": a complex challenge necessitating equally complex solutions. To this end, policy makers and scientists alike have proposed a range of solutions, from cap and trade to carbon capture. Recently, natural climate solutions (NCS) have seen increasing support as intuitive and effective options to mitigate climate change and stem the tide of precipitous biodiversity declines. Lauded for the variety of societal and environmental benefits they can provide, NCS seek to harness the intrinsic properties of ecosystems to tackle issues such as climate change, food insecurity, waste management, biodiversity loss, and economic inequality.

The concept of NCS, also known as Nature-based Climate Solutions, was first introduced in the early 2000s by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the World Bank. It was subsequently picked up by European policy-makers and has since made its way to Canada. NCS is an umbrella concept that proposes natural ecosystem-based solutions to address climate change and biodiversity loss. According to the IUCN, NCS are "actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems, that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits". Definitions of NCS vary, with some emphasizing the economic benefits, and others the environmental benefits. However, as a matter of practice, NCS recognize the inherent linkages between society and the environment, and center NCS as a tool which can benefit both.

Benefits of NCS

The climate benefits provided by NCS are often multi-faceted. For example, protecting forest ecosystems eliminates the emissions generated through deforestation. These intact forests in turn remove carbon from the atmosphere, storing it long-term. A 2017 study led by The Nature Conservancy found that NCS have the potential to mitigate the effects of 11.3 billion tonnes of greenhouse gases (GHGs) annually. This is the equivalent of 37% of the emission reductions necessary over the next 10 years to limit global warming to 2°C. NCS can yield these impressive results while protecting and restoring critical wildlife habitat. What's more, not only are NCS effective, they have proven to be adaptable and cost-efficient. Projects that typify the goals of NCS include New York City's expansive work to maintain the health of the watersheds which supply water to 9.5 million people, or India's 12,500-hectare East Kolkata Wetlands which, though under increasing threats from development, filter one billion litres of the city's wastewater each day.

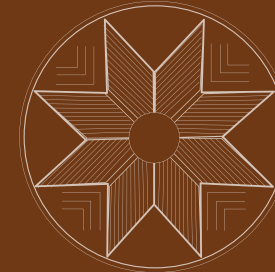
In addition to these long-term climate mitigation benefits, NCS provide a host of co-benefits. For example, sustainable agricultural practices initiated by NCS can foster more resilient food systems and alleviate soil degradation. Natural infrastructure such as green roofs can mitigate the symptoms of urbanization such as heat islands or air pollution, while restored wetlands reduce stormwater runoff. Through these co-benefits, NCS helps to render both landscapes and people more resilient to the effects of global change.

How can we make NCS effective?

While the benefits of NCS have been widely extolled, they are not a given, and not all approaches are created equal. As NCS are broadly adopted, careful consideration must be paid to how each project is implemented. As such, the IUCN espouses eight guiding principles for NCS. These state that in order to achieve specific outcomes NCS must: embrace established conservation norms, be highly localized and incorporate existing cultures and knowledge, be equitable and transparent, safeguard diversity and ecosystem adaptability, be applied at a landscape scale, balance present and future interests, and be effectively integrated into policy. It is also important to recognize that proponents of NCS call for steep CO2 emissions reductions in conjunction with NCS. Both will be necessary as we work towards a sustainable future.

Netukulimk

The Mi'kmaw word netukulimk encapsulates the concepts embraced by natural climate solutions, and is an integral part of the Mi'kmaw worldview. The Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources describes netukulimk as "the use of the natural bounty provided by the Creator for the self-support and well-being of the individual and the community. Netukulimk is achieving adequate standards of community nutrition and economic well-being without jeopardizing the integrity, diversity, or productivity of our environment".



The ecosystems that NCS aspires to restore and protect are part of the unceded traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq, and have long been inhabited according to netukulimk. As such, for NCS to be successful they must uphold Mi'kmaw rights, and incorporate Mi'kmaw people, knowledges, and culture as an integral element of the approach.

TAKE ACTION

Sign on to our [#ClimateGoals](https://www.ecologyaction.ca/#ClimateGoals) campaign at [ecologyaction.ca/climategoals](https://www.ecologyaction.ca/#ClimateGoals), and stay tuned for upcoming webinars and details on provincial consultations where you can make your voice heard!



Think global, act local

NCS make intuitive sense here in Canada, where we still have the chance to protect or restore many ecologically rich landscapes. In a nation with high per-capita emissions (consistently amongst the highest in the world) NCS present an opportunity to leverage some of our most valuable assets to address our shortcomings. NCS are also a clear complement to two cornerstones of Canada's eco-ambitions; protect 30% of our land and oceans, and reduce Canada's GHG emissions by 30%, all by 2030. The protection and restoration of aquatic and terrestrial landscapes can also help to ease the pressure on Canadian biodiversity which has seen continuing declines over time. In 2020, the Federal government committed to prioritizing NCS through the introduction of a \$3.9 billion Natural Climate Solutions Fund intended to plant trees, restore degraded ecosystems, and support NCS-based agriculture.

In Nova Scotia, the concept is also taking root. The TransCoastal Adaptations center, based at Saint Mary's University, engages with industry, academia, governments, and Indigenous partners to implement NCS in coastal areas. Elsewhere, projects not necessarily branded as NCS embrace the principles on which the concept relies. For example, the Mi'kmaw Conservation Group is leading a project to restore coastal wetlands along the Bay of Fundy, which has both benefits for climate change mitigation and redressing biodiversity decline. From salt marsh wetlands to productive eelgrass beds to our beloved Acadian forest, many of Nova Scotia's diverse ecosystems are ideal candidates to be both harnessed and conserved as NCS.

Humans have long sought inspiration in the natural world, and there is no small irony in returning to nature for solutions to problems stemming from the destruction of that same resource. To many, these concepts may not seem new, and in some ways NCS borrow from established practices that environmental practitioners and Indigenous communities have long understood. This approach brings together elements of climate change action and conservation needs into cost-effective, thoughtful, policy-driven projects. When thoughtfully implemented, appropriately funded, and properly monitored for results, NCS have the potential to play a major role in addressing the challenges of climate change while also fostering the resilient ecosystems and communities that will be necessary for the times to come.

Paige Crowell is a conservation biologist living and working in Halifax.

Ecological Fiction Inspires Action!

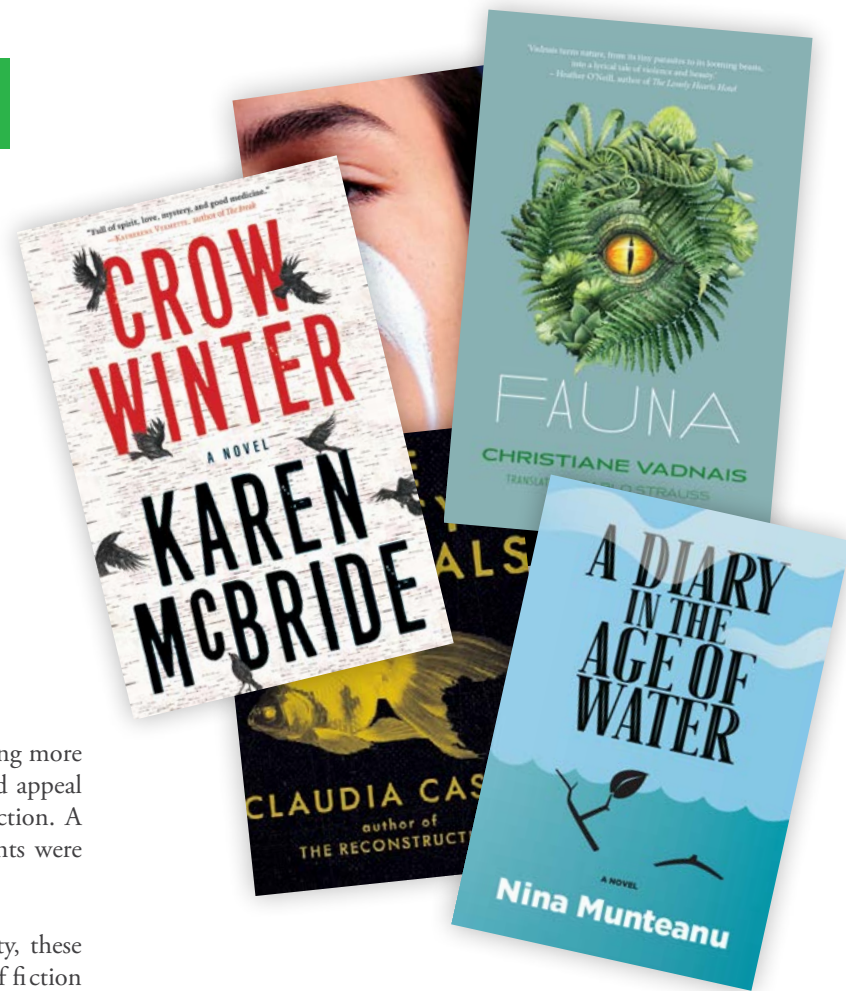
by **MARY WOODBURY** /// EAC Volunteer

Fiction exploring humanity's impacts on nature is becoming more popular. It has the distinct ability to creatively engage and appeal to readers' emotions. In fact, it can stir environmental action. A survey I took last year showed that 88% of its participants were inspired to act after reading ecological fiction.

Principled by real science and exalting our planet's beauty, these stories are works of art. They live within classic modes of fiction exploring the human condition, but also integrate the wild. They can be referred to as "rewilded stories." The following Canadian titles are some of my favourites in this genre.

Christiane Vadnais' *Fauna* is a collection of connected noir stories from a weird climate-changed world, partly inspired by southern Québec's dark forests. *A Diary in the Age of Water*, by Nina Munteanu, is set in a near-future Toronto, in which climate and ecological destruction brings forth a world where water is scarce. In Claudia Casper's *The Mercy Journals*, set mostly in British Columbia, we are motivated by the main character's journey from apathy to redemption in an ecologically destroyed world. These stories are rife with descriptions of the natural world held in a delicate balance.

Cherie Dimaline's *The Marrow Thieves* also visits a future world devastated by climate disruption with macabre unorthodox outcomes. It features Indigenous young adults providing inspiration as they fight for the lives of their people. Nalo Hopkinson's *Brown Girl in the Ring* is set in post-apocalyptic Toronto. Mysterious and mystical, it also tackles themes of racism and the rise of hope and empowerment by women of colour. In Algonquin Anishinaabe Karen McBrider's *Crow Winter*, a woman and a demigod crow try to save their sacred land. Waubgeshig Rice's *Moon of the Crusted Snow* shows strength on a Northern Ontario First Nations reserve as an ominous event turns the village dark. In these stories, BIPOC authors combine the cultural with the ecological, often serving as cautionary tales and showcasing the intersectionality of societal issues.



In Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas' *Carpe Fin*, which fuses manga with Haida storytelling, a community in a northern temperate rainforest near the ocean deals with a fuel spill wreaking havoc on food supplies. *Twenty-Six*, by Leo McKay Jr., is a fictionalized and emotional account of a real mining disaster in Nova Scotia. Thomas King's *The Back of the Turtle* is an iconic novel about a First Nations scientist's guilt after he develops a defoliant chemical destroying a community's environment. Jennifer Dance has written stories such as *Hawk*, which addresses racism while focusing on topics such as Canada's oil sands and the safety of animals. Catherine Bush's *Blaze Island* uses Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as an allegory for climate change and is inspired by storms on Fogo Island. In these stories, human impacts on natural systems necessitate our species' resilience.

This sampling of stories is only that – a sample. I urge readers to dive into reading rewilded work to aid in finding our best ways forward in reality.

Mary Woodbury lives in Nova Scotia and runs dragonfly.eco, a site exploring ecofiction around the world. She has guest-authored at Stormbird Press, ClimateCultures.net, [Chicago Review of Books](http://ChicagoReviewofBooks), SFFWorld.com, and [Fjord's Review](http://Fjord'sReview), and is part of the core team of writers at Artists & Climate Change; she also has published two books (pen name Clara Hume) exploring climate change: *Back to the Garden* and *Bird Song: A Novella*.

The Head, Hands and Heart of Sustainability

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN THE CLIMATE CRISIS

by **ASHLEY BOONE** /// EAC Volunteer

Climate change is currently the most important issue we face globally - even amidst a global pandemic. It affects every living being as we so delicately rely on the climate to survive. Although the effects of climate change may feel far from our daily realities, effective discussions and actions must take place for sustainable solutions.

How do we begin? It seems that climate change presents itself as too large, too complex a problem to tackle alone or as a community, an organization, or a government. Yet, because we are a species who thinks, feels, and acts, it's possible through self-reflection, community involvement, and relationship building to start having effective conversations about climate change.

The Head:

Admittedly, thinking got us here in the first place. Our minds shape our reality. Having effective conversations which lead to sustainable actions requires us first to be clear and knowledgeable. In a world of sensationalized fake news, frustrating climate deniers, confounded scholarly arguments, and mass amounts of information to sift through, it's no wonder the mind grows weary! Training our attention through mindfulness practices can be a first step towards discernment and perseverance in the pursuit of sustainable goals. Mindfulness offers a time to pause, include reality as it is, and shift our behaviours into alignment with our personal ethos. If climate change is something we wish to tackle together, it must begin with our individual beliefs and behaviours.

Ashley Boone is currently completing a degree in Environmental Sustainability at Dalhousie University. She is captivated by surfing in the cold North Atlantic and teaches mindfulness retreats internationally.



PHOTO: Simon Ryder-Burbidge

The Hands:

When sound evidence presents a sustainable path forward, logically, we should try to follow it. More often than not, the difficulty lies in initiating action. There are many avenues of action such as volunteering, lobbying, protesting, educating, and dedicating our careers to the climate crisis. Our human desires to act upon our values and beliefs can be the most inspiring and productive ways to have effective conversations thereby effectively move forward together. Through community involvement, the actions speak for themselves; by producing measurable change, there is more grist for the sustainable mill.

The Heart:

The strongest driver of change comes from the heart. No matter how much or how little we are affected by climate change, acknowledging our collective stories of suffering and joy can catapult us into action for those less fortunate than ourselves. Empathetic listening is one technique to build relationships with those in our community who may be left out of important conversations. Listening skillfully with compassion also supports in respectfully debating those with differing opinions or misleading data. Communicating critical information can be overwhelming for some, so while one can still convey the facts, show the proof, and debate until global temperatures rise, creating an emotional connection through the art of friendship and storytelling may be the most successful communication strategy of all.

Linking the head, the hands, and the heart together is crucial when working with the climate crisis and sustainable solutions; it is personal ethics, logical reasoning, and heartfelt relationships that will provide a solid foundation for effective conversations, and worthwhile actions.



Hydrostone

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LEARN MORE AT: assante.com/advisors/richardnickerson

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We support the Ecology Action Centre because they have successfully demonstrated the connection between environmental issues, local communities and the local economy. That is why we donate \$ 500 every time an EAC member buys or sells a property using our services, helping to strengthen EAC's voice and impact. We're thankful to partner with EAC to help make this a better a world.

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 Ecology Action Centre

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Quiet Streets, Community Voices:

KEEPING NOVA SCOTIA MOBILE

by ANIKA RIOPEL /// EAC Staff

With the first full lockdown in Spring 2020, life changed drastically. With numerous businesses and all schools closed, most activities canceled and many people working from home or laid-off, our streets were suddenly empty.

As we adapted, getting outdoors and moving became essential: running shoes were dusted off, bike sales boomed. The reduction in car traffic made streets safer and active travel an option for those wary in the past.

Previously radical ideas were implemented/tested:

- The HRM's **Slow Streets** initiative showed that we can reduce speed limits on residential roads - making roads safer to all users;
- Working from home reduced peak-hour traffic;
- Offering affordable bikes and repairs to underserved and marginalized communities made cycling accessible to all;
- An E-bikes pilot program provided an alternative to a second vehicle;
- Free-to-use transit ran on federal funds rather than fares from riders.

But the pandemic also highlighted and intensified issues around transportation inequity:

- Members of BIPOC communities voiced concerns around being policed for stepping off sidewalks to practice proper social distancing;
- People with mobility limitations were forced to navigate people as well as spaces when others failed to practice social distancing;
- Communities without sidewalks or paved shoulders faced greater risk using their streets; the risk of exposure on transit was unknown;
- Park/trail closures meant urban and suburban areas lost access to nature;
- The risk of exposure on transit was unknown, and has yet to be broadly corrected or communicated.

The pandemic demonstrated the importance of moving for health and wellbeing. We need to improve the design of our communities so that more safe mobility options are available to all ages and abilities.

Moving forward, how can we ensure positive momentum, particularly for communities that are often underserved? Below is a series of snapshots of voices and projects reflecting on transportation in Nova Scotia.



Positive Outcomes

“ I biked so far — almost 300 kilometers. Unless the weather is really bad...I'm still biking... my overall wellbeing, I feel great. ”
—Easyride participant, male, 42

“ I'm a mother of two teenage daughters, I work full time at the hospital. The savings and time in my commute...it's very relaxing to ride a bike...therapeutic almost, especially going across that bridge where you're totally safe, in a designated bike lane so you're not having to worry about traffic for that part of your commute. ”
—Easyride participant, female, 48

“ I can't tell you the liberation {a bicycle} gives me. To safely travel to gather the needs of my children. It also gives me the ability to spend more quality time with my kids. ”
—Pedal Through the Pandemic participant, female, Lower Sackville

Changes Needed

“ Our roads are bumpy and hard to bike on, we have a few basketball courts and skateparks but they're all broken-up; at least fix them for us. ”
—Junior High Student, Dartmouth North, male

“ [We] need more street lights...more bike lanes, more public restrooms, and more recreational areas... [We know there] are positives like, the crosswalks and public transportation. ”
—Junior High Student, Dartmouth North, female

“ As a wheelchair user, when on a sidewalk I don't have the control to get out of someone's way if they won't follow social distancing guidelines... myself, and others in the community, such as those who are blind or low vision, dealt with a lot of anger — people getting in our faces and yelling at us. Also, a lot of people seemed to forget that accessible parking spots are for people who need them. ”
—Wheelchair user, female

Anika Riopel is the EAC's Welcoming Wheels Coordinator. She's all about making riding a bike fun and accessible to all!

A Glimpse Under the Hood

NEW DEMONSTRATION ELECTRIC VEHICLE UNVEILED IN NOVA SCOTIA

by JÉRÉMIE BERNARDIN /// EAC Volunteer

With roughly 98 percent of Canada's vehicles currently being powered by gasoline, it is clear beyond a doubt that electrifying our transportation will be crucial if our society wants to tackle climate change and meet our emissions targets. And here in Nova Scotia there is much work to be done. Nationally electric vehicles (EVs) account for roughly 3.5 percent of sales, whereas in Nova Scotia that number is only .03 percent.

But with EV sales poised to increase by roughly 30 percent globally in the next decade alone, a fossil free future for Nova Scotia's transportation is more than possible. Shipping of goods and public transit are both critical pieces of that future. But if we want to make it a reality, we're also going to need people to start driving EVs.

So how can we get drivers to ditch gas and go electric?

All EV Canada, an electric vehicle dealership in Dartmouth, feels that one of the barriers is unfamiliarity with EVs in general. They believe that if drivers are more comfortable with the way that EVs work, they will be more inclined to consider going electric.

And so they've developed a unique opportunity for the public to do just that.

Nova Scotians will soon have the chance to peek under the hood of an all-electric Tesla Model 3, and see firsthand its inner working. This Interactive Demonstration Electric Vehicle (IDEV) has been converted into a cutaway, so that viewers can look in at aspects of the vehicle's design, such as the battery modules, the electric motor, and the additional storage area traditionally taken up by the engine and gas tank in a gas-powered vehicle.



PHOTO: Jérémie Bernardin

Ally Garand, a 4th year Dalhousie Mechanical Engineering student, was also brought on to design interactive elements and digital displays that will walk the viewer through active and passive safety features, and clarify the key differences between an EV and a gasoline vehicle.

The IDEV will be touring Nova Scotia at tradeshows, universities, high schools and various events. All EV Canada hopes to provide consumers and the public with a unique insight into how EVs function through a hands-on experience and leave them with an enhanced comfort and familiarity with EVs in general.

And hopefully this education — coupled with consumer incentives (like the \$3,000 and \$2,000 rebates announced by the province in February), supply-side mandates and other much needed contributions from government at the provincial and federal level — can help increase the number of EVs on Nova Scotian roads, and help us envision a low carbon future for our province's transportation.

LEARN MORE

To learn more about EVs, their environmental impact and their costs, email: info@allev.ca or ask to join their next webinar on "Which EV Is Right For Me?" or Visit Allev.ca

Jérémie Bernardin has focused his career on accelerating the transition to electrified transportation in Canada, he is the President and Co-Founder of the Electric Vehicle Association of Atlantic Canada and Vice-President of Sales at All EV Canada.

Too Close to the Coast!

INAPPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT AND COASTAL ADAPTATION

by NANCY ANNINGSOON /// EAC Staff



Lucy* and Michael* (*not their real names) bought their coastal property in Halifax, Nova Scotia in 2017. They were beyond excited to build their dream home along Nova Scotia's beautiful coastline. They worked with a team of experts – surveyor, architect, a developer/contractor, septic designer - to design their dream home, eager to move forward with their project. Before long though, challenges began to emerge.

Their lot was small, with only about 50 feet from the edge of the roadway to the normal high water mark at the cove, and it was extremely steep. Fitting a home with the living space they desired along with an approved septic system on the lot required several variations on the plans. The septic system was particularly challenging. It had to be reworked several times before a permit could be acquired. With each rework, costs were growing.

Meanwhile, neighbours began expressing their concerns about the safety of the home and about the implications of a septic system so close to their beloved and well-used cove. This cove is a place where kids swim and families canoe and kayak. These neighbours approached Lucy and Michael when they visited the site, they spoke to the developer onsite and calls were made to municipal representatives and the region's MLA, raising their concerns. Eventually, a group of neighbours took the permit decision to court but were unsuccessful in reversing it. This left a strain on relationships in the community before Lucy and Michael's family had even moved in.

With construction underway, Hurricane Dorian struck in September of 2019. During the storm, and for several days afterwards, the house's foundation was soaking wet with a corner submerged, until the water level returned to normal. This gave Lucy and Michael pause for thought, but the project was well advanced and they hoped that this was a rare occurrence.

After numerous attempts to drill a freshwater well, the couple were extremely distressed to find that they were too close to the water's edge to have a freshwater well and they would have to acquire a holding tank and make water a commodity to be delivered to their home, much like heating fuel.

As the costs soared, they realized that they had made a risky decision in purchasing an 'undersized lot' in Halifax and that they had not sufficiently considered the risks associated with coastal climate change. Lucy and Michael are now weighing their options – considering whether or not to stay, or to try to recoup their expenses by selling and begin planning a different, safer coastal dream project.

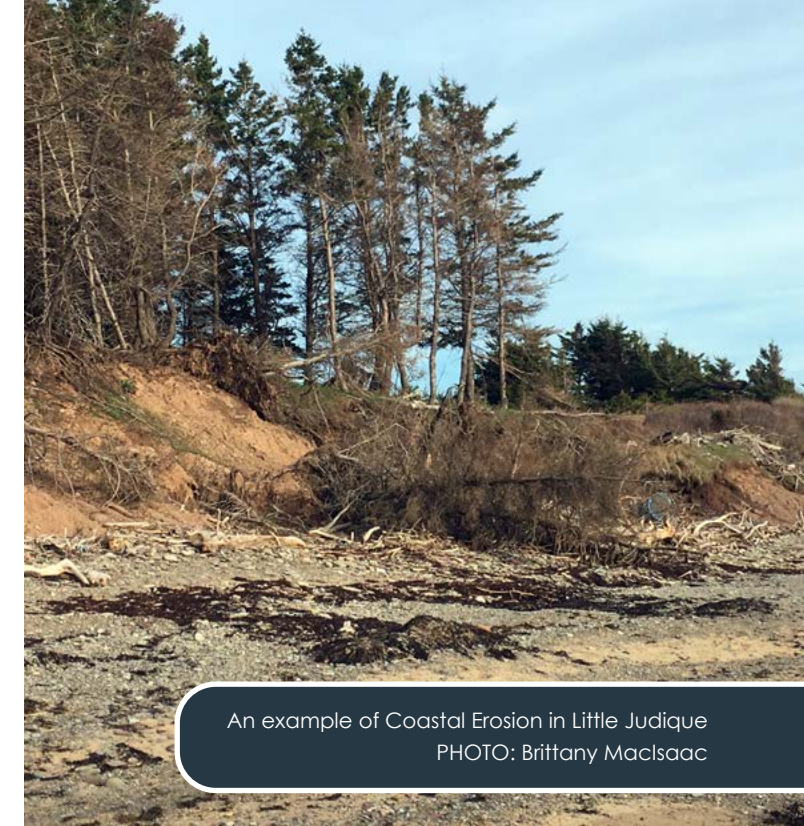
This story is not unique and is happening far more than it should be. Despite the fact that Nova Scotia is facing the most severe sea level rise predictions in the country, and that we are on the path for hurricanes and tropical storms, we continue to see citizens making dangerous decisions like this.

Coastal climate change in Nova Scotia is a combination of coastal flooding, storm surge, accelerated coastal erosion, inundation, and saltwater intrusion of freshwater wells. We are a province with 13,300 kilometres of coastline and approximately 70% of our population lives in coastal communities. Our towns along the coast are experiencing dramatic impacts, with flooding in Liverpool, frightening inundation prediction for towns like Annapolis Royal and accelerated erosion all along the Northumberland Shore.

Our province does not have an adaptation plan to help citizens and communities along the coast. Information about coastal adaptation options is still not readily available for users and we do not have a cadre of training service providers who can offer nature-based coastal adaptation solutions. There are a number of rock wall and seawall construction crews around the province, but the negative impacts of these approaches are not well understood and the costs associated with 'hard armouring' are significant.

Fortunately, we do have a Coastal Protection Act (Bill 106) which will soon be in force and will stop us from building in dangerous places along the coast. However, it is taking time for the regulations to be developed and risky decisions are being made during this lag. The Act will ensure that the province has a minimum setback and a minimum vertical allowance which will prevent building close to the water's edge and in low lying areas. This legislation will not protect structures which already exist along the coast, except to regulate modifications to structures in risky areas.

The Ecology Action Centre's Coastal Team has been working for several years to try to help individuals and communities understand the risks associated with building too close to the water's edge. In 2018, we developed the sealevelrise.ca website – which provides information, infographics, tools, videos and an interactive map.



An example of Coastal Erosion in Little Judique
PHOTO: Brittany MacIsaac

We have hosted countless in-person and virtual sessions sharing information about coastal climate change, adaptation and risk governance. Yet, despite our efforts to spread the word, we continue to hear from individuals who have either contemplated a risky purchase or have made a decision like Lucy and Michael and are now realizing the potential danger.

Our province is poised on the brink of a massive liability issue. At some point, we will likely see litigation between buyers who purchase a piece of land or a property in good faith and who find their newly acquired asset to be in peril from coastal climate change. Several areas in the United States now require a property disclosure statement to ensure that the purchaser is aware of looming risk of this kind. There are currently several coastal developments underway in Nova Scotia, which will be impacted by the incoming Coastal Protection Act. If those developments have not yet secured building permits when the Act goes into force, there may be legal challenges associated with those properties. What are buyers who have purchased undersized lots going to do when the new regulations prevent them from actually building on their land? Are municipalities putting themselves at legal risk by issuing permits for what will soon be deemed inappropriate coastal development under the Coastal Protection Act?

It is time to stop building in dangerous places and to start doing everything we can to protect our coastal ecosystems which are trying to adapt and be resilient in the face of overwhelming climate change impacts.

Nancy Anningsoon is Coastal Adaptation Senior Coordinator at the Ecology Action Centre. Nancy's work is focused on coastal protection, building awareness of coastal climate change and helping Nova Scotia move to action on coastal climate change adaptation.

Re-imagining Intersections as Places for Reconnection

by **ASHLEY GIBSON & ANASTASIA PAPADOPOULOS** /// EAC Volunteers

Urbanization is occurring at a rapid rate around the world. Cities in North America, especially after World War II, are designed for efficiency: to allow people in cars to get from point A to point B as quickly as possible. We know that designing cities for driving promotes the use of vehicles. More vehicles mean more carbon dioxide and subsequent global climate change. How does the design of a city impact the ability of people in communities to connect with one another? How does designing for technology rather than for the people who use those technologies affect how we interact?

How cities are designed plays a huge role in community well-being and our capacities to connect and interact with one another. The establishment of grid systems, convenient for getting around in our cars, favour public spaces designed for transportation rather than for connection and interaction. We can trace grid systems back to colonialism and ensuing standardized city designs. Mark Lakeman—a leader in sustainable community design and public spaces from Portland, Oregon—says these designs create places where “time and space are for sale”.

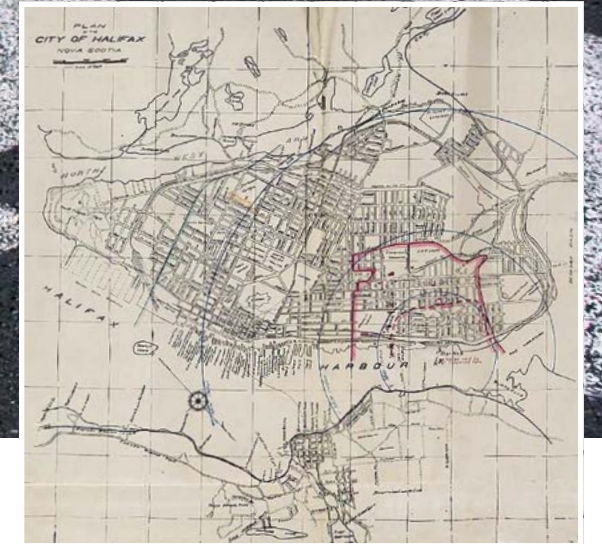
Globalization has exacerbated the impacts of these grid systems and has re-formulated our understanding of cities. They are seen as networks for transportation built around single city centres, not as diverse places with multiple centres, multicultural populations, and uneven connectivity. Many cities foster socio-cultural segregation by compartmentalizing sections of cities into isolated areas.

People living in cities are experiencing high levels of social isolation and feeling more and more disconnected from people and their communities. This isolation has dramatic effects on both the physical and mental health of community members.

Obviously, the global COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the impacts of social isolation within cities. In an article written by Sean Hertel, R.P.P. and Dr. Roger Keil for the Ontario Professional Planners Institute in 2020, it states that the pandemic has highlighted the importance of planning for healthy communities which not only foster access to public spaces but also recognize who has access to these spaces.

The Coalition to End Social Isolation and Loneliness in Washington, D.C. made the following policy recommendations in response to the social impacts of COVID-19 in an open letter published in 2020: (1) Maintain and improve access to mental and behavioral health services that mediate the mental health implications of social isolation and loneliness for vulnerable populations; (2) Improve the public health response to COVID-19 and widespread social isolation and loneliness; (3) Provide for additional targeted funding for programs and services under the Older Americans Act; and (4) Enhance supports for our nation’s education system to combat the effects of social isolation and loneliness for our now displaced students. Although this letter was specific to the U.S.A., we should consider how these recommendations apply within the Halifax context.

The pandemic has demonstrated how cities and by extension people living there are maladapted for such extreme isolation. It is essential for us to continue to abide by public health protocols. However, that doesn't mean we can't engage with spaces which community members continue to utilize on a day-to-day basis. As we think about ways to imagine our futures post-pandemic, we can re-imagine ways communities can reclaim public spaces for community connection.



TAKE ACTION

If you're interested in reclaiming public spaces to enhance community connection, in getting involved with existing place-making projects or starting your own project with some friends or neighbours, there are funds available through Neighbourhood Placemaking with the City of Halifax.

Also, check out the work being done by COLAB (thecolab.ca), PBJ Designs (pbjdesign.ca), and CityRepair (cityrepair.org). But above all, talk to your neighbours and see how you can work together!

Increasingly, ideas to enhance access to the “social commons” are being explored as ways to create gathering places and to respond to social isolation. Social commons include spaces we walk through when crossing traffic intersections, wait around when we are catching the bus, or in grocery store lines. Now more than ever these spaces are at the center of how we access socialization: the places where we greet and reconnect, even if it is just in passing. With more recognition being given to the need for social connection for our physical and mental health, we are at a unique juncture where we can shift how these public areas are perceived and utilized.

Mark Lakeman, of City Repair Project in Portland, Oregon, looks to “intersection-repair” as a way to transform these crossroads into places where people coming together and create spaces for human relationships to be fostered. The City Repair Project approaches intersection repair through things like street paintings and ecological landscaping on city streets. Intersection repairs in Halifax by organizations like COLAB have created street murals, bus stop paintings and public pianos have fostered place-making in the social commons. Intersection repair projects have taken shape in several different places across the city, although many are now fading away.

Illustration of Halifax grid system extending back to circa 1916. Source: Royal Society of Canada. Department of National Defence. Library and Archives Canada, circa 1916. (CC BY 2.0)

Lakeman explains, “There was a time before cars existed that the spaces between our homes brought us together for all manner of activities, for festivals, and celebrations, and projects”. In modern city grid systems, the spaces between our homes are for transit, and intersections, where our pathways converge, are ironically used as dividing measures to separate neighborhoods from each other. Reclaiming these spaces represents a movement of reclaiming relationships with our neighbours and our place within the social commons.

If we wish to get involved as individuals in these processes, the city has applications for neighborhood place making projects including intersection painting. This is on hold for COVID-19 but this gives us time to brainstorm; what can it mean to us to “create place”? In the meantime, we recommend reaching out to our neighbours by phone, card, email, to get to know what this might mean for them too.

Ashley & Anastasia are two community-based land relations practitioners who focus their work on understanding community priorities in land-use decision making and fostering sustainable relationships between communities and the environment.

Action is our Middle Name

ENERGY

This winter, the Energy Team partnered with groups in the Atlantic region to push for common energy agendas. We built support for the Atlantic Loop – an interconnected regional transmission system which will enable clean energy to flow in the region. We have also been working to promote deep energy retrofit techniques and technologies to property owners and building professionals in Nova Scotia through the Better Building Speaker Webinar Series.

The team commissioned a report by East Coast Environmental Law to analyze Eastern Canadian and New England laws for barriers and opportunities in achieving a reliable, affordable and cleaner electricity system. This would help inform key electricity policymaking and advocate for faster clean transition in the region.

As COVID-19 started to spread in Atlantic Canada, it highlighted vulnerabilities that need to be addressed through the lens of a just and green recovery for everyone. Through our work on limiting the expansion of offshore oil and gas we have started focusing on what a just transition for workers in this industry could look like.

Finally, throughout 2020 the team continued to push the provincial government to announce dates for the Sustainable Development Goals Act public consultations so that regulations can be put into place to achieve our climate targets.

WILDERNESS

The fall of 2020 was distressing not just because of COVID-19, but also because of lack of advancement on many vital wilderness issues. People took to the forest to protect endangered Mainland Moose from government-sanctioned clear-cutting in their habitat. No new provincial protected areas were announced as the government sluggishly moves towards its 13% protected areas target, just as other jurisdictions breeze past them with commitments of 30% land protection by 2030. No meaningful progress was made on implementing the recommendations from the Lahey report on forestry practices, despite strong calls for this from the public and those on the provincial forestry advisory panel (including EAC's Ray Plourde).

The proposed provincial Biodiversity Act "died on the order table" (was not proclaimed/ made into law) because of the lack of a prorogued fall 2020 legislative session. Near-urban parks and other protected areas are now clearly a vital part of many people's physical and mental health, yet we saw no new acquisitions by HRM Parks division in any of the large wild areas around urban Halifax.

All the while, Atlantic Gold kept its operations running through the pandemic and keeps looking to expand its destructive open pit gold mining operations to additional lands and waters on the Eastern Shore. We have our work cut out for us in 2021 but our resolve is strong.

MARINE

Check out our fin-tastic work!

The marine team has been busy working in this unprecedented time by continuing to advocate for strong fisheries policy, ensuring harmful aquaculture practices stay out of our waters, coastal communities and ecosystems are thriving and consumers know where their seafood came from.

For example, through SeaChoice, we launched a new report called "Certification, Verification or Fabrication," which examines the prevalence, verifiability and quality of seafood environmental claims in the Canadian marketplace. We found that upwards of 60 per cent of claims on labels have no information to tell you whether the claim is true or not. That's what we call greenwashing!

We also successfully completed the first season of a citizen science project in which we are training kayakers to collect video-based data on the presence and health of eelgrass meadows in their local waters. We trained paddlers in six communities in 2020 and presented the work at a national workshop. We'll be looking to scale up and conduct surveys in six more communities in 2021.

FOOD

For nearly two decades the Food Team has been nurturing community food initiatives, engaging in policy conversations, and bringing together partners from every aspect of the food system in Nova Scotia. These strong roots and networks have sustained creative community partnerships in meeting food security needs during the evolving covid situation. Other results include the Halifax Food Charter, and launching the JustFOOD action plan to bring the charter to life.

Together with our partners in the Halifax Food Policy Alliance we are now launching a year-long series of community driven Food Systems workshops. Together, we will look at our respective roles, relationships, and impacts within our food systems. With this understanding comes the ability to generate "critical mass" for change. Watch for food and agricultural policy change, co-creating local school food sourcing solutions, and spaces designed or re-purposed for urban farming and markets. We are even working on an app!

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Municipal plans, policies and elections have been in the spotlight for the Built Environment team. The EAC released a HRM Election Guide and candidate survey to help Haligonians match their votes with their values. As part of Our HRM Alliance, the Built Environment team co-hosted the HRM Mayoral Candidates Forum and the District 11 Backlands' debate to highlight the Halifax Green Network and municipal climate action. Council is now undergoing a capital planning period which we have contributed to, highlighting the importance of investing in climate.

Across the municipality, Secondary and Backyard suites hold the ability introduce gentle density and additional housing into our neighbourhoods. The EAC's Urban Development Advocacy Team launched a webpage to help community members learn about and comment on these suites, which are now allowed across HRM.

Halifax's Regional Plan is being reviewed, which holds a major opportunity to implement the Green Network Plan and to protect the Halifax Green Network. Through a formal submission to the Regional Plan review, we have expressed our top priorities for changes to the Regional Plan. Citizens will soon have the opportunity to contribute to the Regional Plan.

TRANSPORTATION

Keeping pace with COVID

Adapting to the needs of 2020, the Transportation Team developed online resources for Making Tracks: Pedestrian Safety and 6 bike safety videos (in English, French, Arabic and Mi'kmaq). We offered online courses for Urban Cycling (60 adults) and Youth Active Transportation Leadership (40+ students). Our International Walk to School Month event engaged over 12,000 students.

We co-hosted virtual information sessions on NS's Traffic Safety Act and the need to strengthen policies for walking and wheeling with over 150 stakeholders attending. And we co-facilitated conversations on transportation needs in smaller communities for the NS Main Streets initiative.

Welcoming Wheels and Bike Buddies gave away 93 bikes and accessories to newcomers, and Bike Again (Halifax and Yarmouth) gifted 133 bikes and 37 accessory packs to community members and youth. Finally, the mobile Pop-Up Bike Hub trailer visited Clayton Park, Mulgrave Park, Lakeside and 6 Mi'kmaq communities with 299 bikes tuned up/repaired. In total, that's 562 people who got rolling this past summer!

COASTAL

The Coastal Team has been working on a number of different initiatives, taking advantage of virtual technology and communication tools to expand our reach. In summer/fall of 2020, we hosted Coastal Climate Change Adaption Options webinars, featuring Living Shorelines (with Rosmarie Lohnes of Helping Nature Heal) and the Coastal Protection Act (with John Somers of NS Environment).

In the fall, we participated in a MacEachen Institute Coastal Risk Governance panel and gave a presentation to the Canadian Red Cross Atlantic Chapter Conference. In 2021, We have hosted zoom presentations and discussion sessions with municipal counsellors and staff from coastal communities across Nova Scotia, trying to bridge the gap in accessible information about coastal adaptation, to aid coastal community decision makers as they move to action.

We recently created a Coastal Climate Change in Nova Scotia infographic and we are now working on a Tip Sheet for coastal property owners, with some other helpful tools in the planning stages. Please check out the Coastal page of the EAC website to access these resources.

The Seasonal Gourmet

by **ROSE HAMILTON** /// EAC Staff

Spring Clean Trio

Back in the day, we ate according to what was available in season. Our winter diet was often root vegetables, dried starches such as wild rice or pulses, and meat proteins which would be preserved with fats. Traditional examples include pemmican, meat pies, potted meats, sausages and similar. Pretty heavy stuff but it kept us warm! By springtime we were desperate for vitamin C and something to refresh our kidneys and liver. Enter this traditional springtime trio, which can be easily found and wild gathered in your neighborhood. I have enjoyed these delightful greens from Northern Greece to Southern Sweden, the Appalachian highlands to the British Columbian coast.

When gathering, be sure to avoid roadsides, lawns or parks treated with pesticides, or wooded areas which have been sprayed with glyphosates. Late April to early May is prime time for fiddleheads - don't wait too long. Dandelion Greens and Stinging Nettles grow from April through early fall, although the early young leaves have the best flavour. Remember to gather no more than 10% of any stand of the plants, and drink a little extra water when eating them. Here are the basics for cooking and two extra ways to enjoy.

Fiddleheads: Take a cup or two of fiddleheads, clean well and trim the stems of browned edges. Bring a pot of lightly salted water to a rolling boil, add the fiddleheads, and boil for at least 5 minutes. Drain the water, and transfer them into a frying pan. Saute in olive oil with chopped garlic.

Dandelion Greens: These make a great fresh salad. They also can be steamed, sautéed with in olive oil and garlic, or wilted on a dry pan with fresh squeezed lemon juice.

Stinging Nettles: Gather a goodly bundle of nettle tops using gloves and long sleeves. The tops are most tender, although you can use up to 6" of the stalk & leaves. Soak the nettles in hot water to reduce stinging power. Sauté in olive oil until wilted, then add lemon juice. Finish stir frying till the lemon has evaporated and leaves are tender. If you like, throw in some last-minute pine nuts, for extra flavour.

Dandy Nettle Soup

Use cooked and chopped Dandelion Greens and Stinging Nettles in equal parts. Add a soup base of equal parts white wine, cream, and either vegetable or chicken broth. Your mix should be about 1-part greens and 3-4 parts liquid. Simmer while stirring, until the wine alcohol has evaporated. Soup can be eaten as is, or use a staff mixer to make a rich creamy version.

Spring Quiche

Using any or all three of your pre-cooked and chopped greens, mix 2 cups with 6 beaten eggs, 1 cup cream, and 1 cup shredded hard cheese. Mild Emmental, Gruyere, or Jarlsberg are recommended. Pour into a large pie dish lined with pastry, or two smaller ones. Bake at 350°F, until lightly browned and almost set in the middle. This is usually 30-45 minutes depending on the oven and pie size.



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50th ANNIVERSARY COVER CONTEST



CALLING ALL ARTISTS!

**This year, EAC will celebrate its 50th anniversary!
As we reflect on the past half-century of work, we're also
envisioning our future and we would love for you to join us!**

This issue of Ecology & Action features a blank cover as an invitation for you to imagine what's possible and to join us in creating that future. Submit your original artwork featuring your vision of the next fifty years of action for a sustainable, equitable future and we'll select a winner to be featured on the cover of our 50th-anniversary issue of Ecology & Action magazine this summer!

The winning cover artist will also receive a \$300 cash prize.
The contest is open to all ages. For more contest details and to find out how to submit your artwork, visit: ecologyaction.ca/covercontest.

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