Youth Environmental Activism

By Xiuhtezcatl Martinez

In 1992, 12-year-old Severn Suzuki silenced the world at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. She traveled five thousand miles, from Canada to Brazil, to speak on behalf of protecting the earth for generations to come. World leaders came together at this summit from countries around the world to address the issue of climate change and our environmental crisis. Despite Severn’s message and the inspiration amongst our world leaders, the first United Nations Earth Summit in Brazil came and passed without any concrete action or binding legal agreements to protect Earth’s resources. The world soon forgot the powerful message of 12-year-old Severn Suzuki and her cry for action to protect our planet.

More than twenty years have passed and the state of our planet has continued to deteriorate. We continued to release enormous amounts of carbon dioxide fueling our over consumptive lifestyle and the growing population. Living systems that have been evolving for millions of years are collapsing and we are seeing the greatest mass extinction since the dinosaurs roamed the Earth. We are overfishing our oceans at a rate that is threatening the survival of aquatic ecosystems all over the world. Rising temperatures are acidifying our oceans and melting glaciers that contain mass amounts of methane that are being released and adding to our climate crisis. We are losing 7.3 million hectares of forest the lungs of our Earth, every single year while half of our world forests have already been destroyed. Our planets life support systems are unravelling and our survival, the survival of all of Earth’s species are in danger.

In 2012, the United Nations again brought together world leaders to be a part of the Rio+20 UN Summit in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil. Youth also came together for this summit from 110 countries to show the world that we weren’t going to sit idly by as politics and money hindered our leaders from making real systemic decisions and change toward climate solutions. I was honored to speak on UN panels there and to join together in ceremony with Indigenous tribes from across Brazil and different parts of the world to bring the sacred knowledge of the indigenous peoples and remind the world that our voices and messages should not be forgotten, but we fell upon deaf ears. In our frustration over the lack of inaction by world leaders myself and other youth knew we had to do something. We decided to take over UN meetings on the last day of the summit. We entered the meetings and asked for the floor to share a message from the children of the world. We shared our plea for them to wake to the dire state of the world they were leaving us and stand up to protect our future.

As our world is spinning out of control, negotiators, representatives, politicians and the worlds largest polluters came together once again for the COP 20 in Lima Peru in an effort to set the table to come to a binding agreement for Paris in 2015. One hundred and ninety countries presented during the two weeks, but they were not alone. The fossil fuel industry allowed us the freedom to roam the halls of the negotiations in an attempt to weaken the agreement. The outcome of Lima was that they would set goals at the COP 21 in Paris in late 2015.

At this time, we are at a important tipping point in which our very survival depends on a drastic fundamental shift in the way we relate to our Earth. We are viewing the Earth as just a resource and destroying our own life support systems for our materialistic over consumptive life styles and our Earth can no longer support us. We have forgotten that we are all indigenous to the Earth. What do we do to the Earth will affect us all because no one will be able to hide from the affects of run away climate change.

...continued on page 3...
In February 2015, SaskOutdoors awarded our very first Cydney Weir Award for Youth Environmental Leadership to Sky Stinson. Sky is from Craik, Saskatchewan and is 15 years old. She loves spending times outdoors including canoeing, kayaking, hiking, building fires, and skiing. Sky has grown up in a home that features solar power and composting toilets. Much of her food comes from the family garden, orchard, henhouse, and apiary. Sky has presented at a national environmental education conference (in 2013) about youth raising chickens. She organized a multi-day summer camp for other youth in the Craik area that focused on sustainable living and youth environmental leadership. She figured out the camp fees based on food costs and craft supplies. In addition, Sky and her classmates at school started a student club called "U and O", a group dedicated to being Upstanding and Outstanding.

Passion, Vitality, Energy, Excitement. Rather busy at times. But above all, passion. These are the words that people would use to describe Cydney Weir. Cydney was a bright young environmental activist. She was a force to be reckoned with. She was passionate about paddling, the north, Saskatchewan, and more. Just 35 years old, Cydney was a force to be reckoned with. She was passionate about paddling, the north, Saskatchewan, and more.

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The Cydney Weir Award for Youth Environmental Leadership honors the life of Cydney Weir, a young woman who was actively involved in environmental leadership through her participation in Trek School (Regina Public Schools), Outdoor Pursuits (Sheldon Williams Collegiate), and Girl Guides. Cydney’s family, friends, and teachers miss her very much.

With Respect,
SaskOutdoors Awards Committee
CAROLYN DOI is a librarian at the University of Saskatchewan and has also worked with Libraries Without Borders on issues related to access to information and literacy. She is a current participant in the 2014/15 Next Up Program in Saskatoon.

DEANNA TROWSDALE-MUTAFOV has many years of work and volunteer experience in the environmental field including as Conservation and Education manager with Nature Saskatchewan, board member for the Regina Humane Society, City of Regina Climate Change Advisory Committee member, Executive Director of Saskatchewan Association of Watersheds, just to name a few. She has been involved in educational initiatives such as starting a Kids for Saving Earth club at her children’s school. Kris Mutafov is Deanna’s son, studying environmental sciences in Kelowna, BC. Kris has raised thousands of dollars to be donated to animal shelters in Saskatchewan in honor of his mom who is fighting a rare form of cancer.

JENN BERGEN spent the last ten years learning and doing coordination work around social justice issues in Saskatchewan, including founding roles in Generating Momentum: Activist Leadership Training Camp and the Queen City Hub. She is currently pursuing a PhD in Education at the University of Ottawa, where her research interests include feminist and anti-racist participatory action research and youth civic engagement.

JESSIE BEST is a passionate about reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Saskatchewan, and is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Renewable Resource Management while working for the Saskatoon CarShare Co-operative.

LISA HOWELL is a sole parent of two sons and a teacher at Pierre Elliott Trudeau School in Gatineau, Quebec. Her classes have won a Child Right’s Award from the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children (2013) and the Peter Henderson Bryce Award (2014) for their work on Issues of First Nations Education and equality. She is also a MA candidate with a thesis in social justice education at the University of Ottawa.

MEL SYRING was born in Saskatoon and am writing as a colored, heterosexual, male, father, and a full time educator. From 1999 until 2009 I taught Grades 3 to 6. In 2009, I began my Master’s program to challenge the traditional classroom model and started, with my colleague Dustin Kasun, the program EcoJustice in Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools. The initiation of the class was the catalyst for a new approach in our school division for developing, placed based and anti racist education.

DR. MARGARET M. KRESS I am a woman of mixed ancestry, with Metis, French, German and English ancestors. I have been blessed by the Elders, including my parents and those who have welcomed me and taught me about the wonders of Mother Earth. I love exploring the land and the living entities of that land, and I have found there is much diversity everywhere, as in my own heritage. My life work is in the pedagogies of freedom and my research at the University of Manitoba has given me opportunity to dismantle environmental racism through the life knowledges of Indigenous women. I am joining The Mi’kmaq-Wolastoqey Centre (MWC) and the faculty of Education at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton July 1.

RANJAN KUMAR DATTA is a PhD Candidate in the School of Environment and Sustainability at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, Canada. His research interests include advocating for ecological justice and exploring Indigenous meanings of sustainability.

TRACEY MITCHELL For the last 15 years, Tracey has worked with various community-based and non-profit groups from mental health organizations to international development agencies. She has been the coordinator for Next Up Saskatchewan since it began in 2010.

VICKI NELSON has a passion for community development, and Regina is where she enjoys doing this work most. She volunteers on the Boards of the Queen City Hub and the Heritage Community Association. Vicki works for Lumsden Brush Camp, was a founder of Generating Momentum: Activist Leadership Training Camp, and is an alumnus of a ton of other Saskatchewan camp programs.

XIUHTEZCATL ROSIE-MARTINEZ 14-year-old indigenous change agent, environmental activist, public speaker, eco hip-hop artist, and the Youth Director of Earth Guardians- Xiuhtezcatl is a powerful voice on the front lines of the youth-led climate movement. He performs internationally at music festivals, organizes demonstrations, and has spoken at over 100 high-impact rallies, events and conferences around the globe. He and his brother, Itzcuautili, regularly give school presentations to ignite and inspire youth to step up as leaders and take action on behalf of the planet. In 2013, Xiuhtezcatl received the 2013 United States Community Service Award from President Obama, and was the youngest of 24 national change-makers chosen to serve on the President’s youth council.

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David Purpel states, “We believe it is imperative that planning not be reduced to the implementation of an already decided set of objectives, but the opportunity for teachers, students, administrators, and community members to participate in practice--namely, the dialectic of emerging theory and practice” (Freire, 2009, pg.148). But even before considering praxis Purpel also discusses how educators can be deceived. For example, I failed to see that the curriculum and my pedagogical practices were oppressing my students. Throughout my teaching career, my eyes were closed and my mind was bound. “Self-deception not only involves denial, fear, avoidance, and fragmentation, but it is also and ultimately self-defeating. When we deceive ourselves and our community, we undermine our efforts to act on our deepest beliefs” (Freire, 2009, pg.62).

Freire states that, “One of the gravest obstacles to the achievement of liberation is that oppressive reality absorbs those within it and thereby acts to submerge men’s consciousness... To no longer be prey to its force, one must consider praxis” (Freire, 2009, pg.26). In my previous teaching experiences, I did not critically think or challenge the curriculum that I was teaching. Whose agenda was I supporting? Looking back there were many years where I was the “oppressor” of liberation and true learning.

PRAXIS = CRITICAL REFLECTION AND CRITICAL ACTION = EDUCATION...ECOJUSTICE

PROGRAM: EcoJustice
LOCATION: Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools
TARGET AUDIENCE: Grade 8
SUBJECTS: language arts, math, science, social studies, art, education, physical education, practical and applied arts, religious studies and health
TEACHING METHODS: problem-based learning, outdoor classroom approach, participatory instruction, community-based, interests-based
WEBSITE: www.scs.sk.ca/ecojustice/
In Susie Weston-Barajas paper “Praxis for the Oppressed”, she creates a framework for educators to begin the process of liberation. She calls it “Teacher Research.”

To shy away from life’s real issues and discussion is not preparing our students for the real world

The process is based on Freire’s work and begins with the ability to read the word and the world. “The first step in teacher research is to critically investigate present realities… it is work that is done collaboratively among teachers… If teachers do not arm themselves with a working knowledge of educational research, theory, and practice, they will be unable to effectively enter the dialogue and have an impact on their world, let alone transform it.” (Weston-Barjas, 1999 pg.24) The next step is to create a critical knowledge through a collaborative effort. In addition, following steps are sharing findings through collaboration, being a political advocate, and realize that the quest for liberation and change is an ongoing effort.

Thus, through frustration of the education system, love for life, and investigation of my own pedagogical practices, EcoJustice was created. The EcoJustice program is comprised of a grade eight classroom at St. Edward School. The purpose of the program is to immerse students in a learning experience that explore issues of social justice through an environmental lens. The program uses problem-based learning and an outdoor classroom approach to enhance student engagement and the real-world application of learning. The EcoJustice Program at St. Edward School endeavours to promote a Creator-centered and sacramental view of the universe and an understanding of the need for equitable use of the Earth’s resources and an option for the poor.

EcoJustice is an ecological participatory program that provides increased environmental awareness, improved school environment, involvement of the local community, pupil empowerment, a spiritual connection with the diverse landscape of Saskatchewan’s land and culture, and moreover the world. Through many dynamic and testing learning experiences EcoJustice students use problem solving skills and first-hand discovery to deal with curriculum questions derived from all required areas of study. The students work cooperatively and form a close community as they share exciting experiences and develop a deeper comprehension of humankind’s connection with the world environmentally, socially and spiritually. The program’s relevant and engaging experiential learning helps students to truly understand and critically evaluate real community issues that affect us all individually, provincially and globally.

To shy away from life’s real issues and discussion is not preparing our students for the real world or allows them to see their impact on the world. Often we discuss issues of social and environmental injustices in the world and allow our students to address them according to their value systems and experience. We allow our students to be empowered and free to investigate and negotiate their learning. We want our students to feel part of their learning and not separated from it. We want them to feel and know that they are powerful instruments of change.

Editors’s Note: Recently, EcoJustice has been busy talking to Cameco about the nuclear industry and at the end of May they head off to the Peel watershed in the Yukon to do an investigation about the importance of protecting this watershed. While in the Yukon they are meeting with the family featured in the documentary All The Time in the World (see the Resources section p. 32-33 for a description).
ENVIRONMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS
SIERRA CLUB BC

HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL PLAN
www.jhcentre.org/human-rights-education/environment

OBJECTIVE
In this lesson, students will use debate style dialogue to explore the pros and cons of Alberta’s oil sands from the perspectives of industry, environmental supporters and Aboriginal peoples. This debate will consider the importance of Canada’s economy, environment and global responsibility.

TIME
STUDENT PREPARATION: 2 class periods
DEBATE/DIALOGUE: 1 class period
EXTENSION ACTIVITY: 2 class periods + 1 class period for career fair

GREEN JOBS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY: SIERRA CLUB
Jeh Custer speaks about the Sierra Club and their focus on mobilizing people around the topic of ‘Green Jobs’. Jeh speaks about the benefits of turning ‘green’ – both environmental and financial. Alberta is seen as a resource colony where others can profit and the people living here will be negatively impacted by this. A change in the governance, business and economic structures to be more reflective of a positive future for our children is the only answer.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES
Students are split into three groups.
Each group is given a title of industry, concerned citizens or Aboriginal community.

MATERIALS
• Computer and Smart Board for video
• Sierra Club video (5:28) Search "Green Jobs and Environmental Sustainability: Sierra Club"
• Learnalberta.ca videos
• Pay Dirt: Alberta’s Oil Sands - Centuries in the Making
• Tar Sands: Canada for Sale
• Ghost of Futures Past: Tom Berger in the North
• News Articles
  - Report Says Oilsands Don’t Deserve Bad Reputation (CTV)
  - Oil Sands: A Strategic Resource for Canada, North America and the Global Market (Natural Resources Canada – Government of Canada)
  - A Pipeline to China Was Always Harper’s Scheme (Huffington post)
  - Put Canada’s Interests Before Oil Industry Profits(LeadNow.ca)
  - Harper ties China trade deals to Canadian values (CBC)
  - Canadian Aboriginal Concerns With Oil Sands (Pembina Institute)

Students hand in their Debate Worksheet prior to the debate/dialogue and have an opportunity to discuss their point with the teacher.

Once students have prepared, they are broken into groups (see above) and begin to dialogue about the following questions:
• Are the Oil Sands good for Canada?
• Should the Canadian government support the expansion of the Oil Sands?
• Should Canada set their sights on foreign markets such as China with regard to oil?

As a large group, ask students to reflect on their debate/dialogue.
Was there a clear winner?
Was it easier to argue from a certain perspective?
Did most students agree with the perspective that they had to defend?
Where does the Canadian government stand on this discussion?

FOR EXTENSION
Watch the Sierra Club video.

In pairs or small groups, students research career opportunities in the energy sector with a focus on renewable energy. Teachers may assign each pair/group a career to research or may leave this up to the students. The more diversity, the better.

Students present their career to the rest of the class in such a way as to “sell” the career – make others want to learn more or enter that field of work.
NEXT UP SASKATCHEWAN: BUILDING CONNECTIONS & CAPACITY FOR CLIMATE ACTION AMONG YOUNG PROGRESSIVE LEADERS

BY CAROLYN DOI AND TRACEY MITCHELL

“This program is integral to building the kind of world that people are proud to call their community,” said one Next Up Saskatchewan graduate upon completing the program in 2013. Next Up is a national leadership training program for 18-32 year olds committed to social and environmental justice. Through seven-month programs in Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Saskatoon, Winnipeg and Ottawa, it aims to train and support the next generation of social change leaders.

In each city, a cohort of 10 to 16 participants meets for one evening each week and one full-day each month to learn about issues and solutions, and build skills to create change.

One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds.

For the 2014-15 program, Next Up chose to focus on the theme of climate change, the first time a national theme has been chosen. Programs nationwide are holding several sessions on climate change and guests have been asked to speak about the intersections between their work and climate change. The goal is not necessarily for all participants to become climate activists as the program recognizes that many issues are important, but program organizers felt that due to the small window in which to prevent climate catastrophe, issues are important, but program organizers felt that due to the small window in which to prevent climate catastrophe, the impact of climate change, Burton came to Next Up looking to strengthen networks and build skills as a community organizer. “I think that is what Next Up is all about: giving you new skills and building on the ones that you have to be a more effective leader and be more empowered with whatever you do in your community,” she said.

This challenge of ecological education means that one lives alone in a world of wounds. An ecologist must either harden their shell and make believe that the consequences of science are none of their business, or they must be the doctor who sees the marks of death in a community that believes itself well and does not want to be told otherwise.”

One challenge of exploring the climate change theme deeply in the program is the emotional impact on the group. As a community organizer with a strong understanding of the ecology behind climate change, Burton came to Next Up looking to strengthen networks and build skills as a community organizer. “I think that is what Next Up is all about: giving you new skills and building on the ones that you have to be a more effective leader and be more empowered with whatever you do in your community,” she said.

2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN? Participants should understand scientific explanations and be able to tell the story of climate change.

3. WHAT DO WE DO? Participants should have a sense of global and local impacts and a sense of where the obstacles to progress are, in order to overcome them.

4. WHAT DO I DO? Participants should know their role in the climate change movement and understand that each person doesn’t have to do everything. The program will work to build a sense of hope and address despair.

5. WHAT ARE THE RESOURCES? Participants should be able to identify where to turn for more information and where to find reliable research. They should have an awareness of which organizations are taking effective action at this time.

Participants should understand scientific explanations and be able to tell the story of climate change. They should have an awareness of which organizations are taking effective action at this time.

One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds. An ecologist must either harden their shell and make believe that the consequences of science are none of their business, or they must be the doctor who sees the marks of death in a community that believes itself well and does not want to be told otherwise.”

This challenge of ecological education means that programs like Next Up, which help create a social support system for participants, are one of the best possible environments in which participants can learn. No matter how difficult it is to learn about climate change and other devastating issues, it is undoubtedly easier to do so surrounded by other committed people, with whom one has built rapport and safety.

This year’s Next Up participants came to the program with varying levels of experience and knowledge of the climate theme. Amber Burton has coordinated local vermiculture workshops, is a co-organizer of the Saskatchewan Eco Network Environmental Film Festival and works to promote watershed stewardship of the Saskatchewan River Basin. As a community organizer with a strong understanding of the impact of climate change, Burton came to Next Up looking to strengthen networks and build skills as a community organizer. “I think that is what Next Up is all about: giving you new skills and building on the ones that you have to be a more effective leader and be more empowered with whatever you do in your community,” she said.

Another 2014/15 Next Up participant, Fred Reiben, co-founder of Unite Marketing Co-op, a marketing company for the non-profit community, credits the Next Up program with giving him a greater sense of work on climate change and ecological initiatives in the province overall: “Participating in Next Up has given me a sense of what is already being worked on versus what is not… It gives me a good sense of the gaps and areas that need attention in the province.”

Jessie Best, Saskatoon CarShare Cooperative coordinator, came into Next Up with a fairly strong understanding of the science behind climate change, but feels that the program has helped her to better understand the concept of environmental racism. “I’d say that I was fairly aware of the science around it and scientifically how we’re affecting the ecosystem. But I wasn’t very well versed on the social effects it was having, like how climate change intersects with poverty and health disparities between populations,” she said. Going forward, Best is committed to working on climate issues while continuing to consider various perspectives: “I think I’ll be really conscious about creating safe spaces for different people and I’ll try to be more aware of whose voices aren’t being heard and how can we change that.”

Though this year’s program is not yet complete, it is clear that participants are much more informed on climate issues and solutions now than when the program began. “The biggest thing I’ve taken away is the local perspective, hearing about what’s happening in Saskatchewan on climate and also the impact of these actions has been useful,” said Reiben. Participants know the risks of ignoring climate issues and they continue to explore the beauty of what is possible as they find new ways of acting together.
A MOTHER-SON CONVERSATION ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM

BY KRIS MUTAFOV & DEANNA TROWSDALE-MUTAFOV

KRIS Mutaflov, age 21, is an Environmental Studies student in Kelowna and he talks with his mom, Deanna Trowsdale-Mutaflov about her path in environmental activism. Deanna is a 2012 winner of the Saskatchewan Eco Network Environmental Activist Award and 2014 YWCA Women of Distinction winner in the category Science, Technology, and Environment.

DEANNA: Right from the beginning when I was a little girl, we had tons of animals. We had dogs, and cats, and fish and gerbils and hamsters. Never had birds in the house because we loved animals, but I started joining groups and really got heavily involved by writing letters - I wrote tons of letters on every subject that you can imagine like animal testing.

And then in my early twenties I started to make connections with the environment. The environment was starting to grow as an activist thing, and I actually, in the late 80s, so I would have been in my mid-twenties, got very heavily involved in environmental activism. And I remember going to an environmental fair in Saskatoon with your dad, and they had tons of environmental booths. It was about Earth Day. It was the first fair I heard of in the province like that.

KRIS: At that point, did you already want to protect it?

DEANNA: No, I didn’t think it was as big as it is now. We didn’t really understand environmental protection to that degree. I think we just loved being outside because we didn’t have technology like kids do nowadays. I think when I went to veterinary college in Saskatoon I of course wanted to be a vet but found out that wasn’t really my true calling, because when I realized and experienced some of the things that we had to do to animals, it was just too hard on me. So I came back and then I got very heavily involved in animal activism. So I not only loved animals, but I started joining groups and really got heavily involved by writing letters - I wrote tons of letters on every subject that you can imagine like animal testing.

KRIS: Back then it was just kinda unheard of. I remember there was a point where you said you never even wanted to get married let alone have kids, and now you have parented two kids and instilled all of your environmental concerns on to us. And I think you were successful, so do you think you had a change of mindset?

DEANNA: Obviously! When I first married your dad, well I didn’t even think I would ever get married, and then we got married. I wasn’t going to have kids. I guess it was because I had read a lot of articles about our Earth’s overpopulation, and I thought I would just be adding to it. So then when I had our first little fella named Kris, I decided that if I was going to have kids, I was going to stay with them and 100% parent them. Teach them everything that they were going to read and write, including everything about the environment and loving animals. And it definitely happened before the age of 5 for both of you. You guys were reading books, counting to well over a hundred in both English and French, and you guys were, well pretty brilliant kids actually. That was my goal, I was going to create two wonderful people but also two little environmentalists. That was my goal. And people that loved animals, because I found many people weren’t taught empathy and kindness and respect for all life. I saw too much of that and I thought I have to be different.

KRIS: (laughing) Having to drive 2 hours just to make the right decision!

DEANNA: Uh huh! And then paper recycling began. And at one of my jobs, I became the official- unofficial, personally-appointed, paper recycler for at least a hundred person office. No one helped, so I did it all by myself, and my job. So I did that for about two years on my own. Then I started an environmental club at that place of work. And a few people joined. And of course now, every office has recycling.

KRIS: So yeah, with the immediate family but I remember you also did tons of school programs as well.

DEANNA: Yeah, then before I had you I worked at Nature Saskatchewan as a Burrowing Owl assistant. And it was so new in those days to have assistants like that for Endangered Species. And I think I was one of the first ones at Nature Saskatchewan. And I just loved that, I went all over the countryside. And my love of nature and especially Species that were threatened just grew immensely by being a part of Nature Saskatchewan. And other every group you can think of, Nature Conservancy, Western Canada Wilderness, People for Animals, Humane Society. I was on boards for several of those groups.

After you two were in school, I started doing a project for Nature Saskatchewan called Plant Watch which was near and dear to my heart, because it was on Climate Change which I had grown very passionate about and had grown to be a huge topic.

I had decided that the biggest thing I could do was to educate and engage youth and adults about Climate change as well as on plants and nature. I always believe that if you could teach people to respect nature when they are young, they might grow up and remember something like that. I hope I made a difference there.

KRIS: Well and like you said, even if you affected a few people, they would branch out.

DEANNA: Well that was it. That every little action that we do is affecting the earth, and they could actually change their actions. And then they could educate other people too.

I also worked for a water organization, Saskatchewan Association of Watersheds, because water is so vital. And if we don’t have clean water in Saskatchewan or anywhere... that’s going to become the new gold of everywhere, it’s water.

KRIS: I remember going to this one presentation and it was basically a representation of all the water that there was on...
earth, and I remember like there was a big bucket, and they said this is all the ocean water that we have, that’s not drinkable, and then you take like one spoonful and then be like, alright, this is our fresh water.

DEANNA: In the future, people won’t care about precious gems and gold, it will be water. And the new environmental wars, I hope it doesn’t come to that, but it just might come to that if people don’t smarten up, will be about water.

KRISS: It probably will.

DEANNA: My passions kind of started when I was young, and then just grew, and grew, and grew, and grew and the past couple of years has been hard because having been diagnosed with cancer and having to go on treatment, I was unable to keep my job with Nature Sask. But it didn’t stop my desire and activism. I sign every petition that I see now unable to keep my job with Nature Sask. But it didn’t stop my desire and activism. I sign every petition that I see now.

KRISS: That’s kind of the ultimate goal, for us, but also for nature still in it for the next generations to live in.

DEANNA: And we are at the tip of the iceberg with Climate Change. You see it in Kelowna with it pouring rain on mountaintops that normally have good snow seasons. And we are seeing bugs that aren’t dying in the winters that are decimating forests, and the biggest thing is the ice-sheets melting. But you know, I think when it affects people personally, then they start to take an interest in thinking, what are you doing? Maybe I can play a part in this. And my hope is that they start to change. And hopefully there is enough people that change, and then you know, we can save the Earth. Hopefully this place can be a clean place, with nature still in it for the next generations to live in.

KRISS: Naw, I’m never.

DEANNA: I don’t think you ever lose that spirit once you have. My hope is that it will just continue on in you guys and in all of my nieces and nephews and their kids. That people will just...maybe the next generation will be better. I am concerned with technology. It can be a good thing but it also can be a really bad thing because it takes kids away from nature.

KRISS: I think we, are maybe not at the level where we are making Earth changing decisions, but I think there is more awareness and education that is trying to be pushed now. And more of a pursuit of knowledge of our problems whereas before no one knew anything and no one cared to know anything. Now at least we see the issues being brought up.

DEANNA: And we are at the tip of the iceberg with Climate Change. You see it in Kelowna with it pouring rain on mountaintops that normally have good snow seasons. And we are seeing bugs that aren’t dying in the winters that are decimating forests, and the biggest thing is the ice-sheets melting. But you know, I think when it affects people personally, then they start to take an interest in thinking, what are you doing? Maybe I can play a part in this. And my hope is that they start to change. And hopefully there is enough people that change, and then you know, we can save the Earth. Hopefully this place can be a clean place, with nature still in it for the next generations to live in.

KRISS: That’s kind of the ultimate goal, for us, but also for other species to continue living and not go extinct because of our actions.

BY VICKI NELSON AND JENN BERGEN

There is a familiar call to action from groups who are working to resist the deterioration of grassroots democracy, which urges youth to “get involved”. This resistance comes in many forms, whether it is students opposing rising post-secondary fees and government austerity agendas, communities fighting to keep social programming from being privatized or cut altogether, citizens opposing pipelines and further resource extraction-based environmental destruction, or groups continuing to resist the dehumanization and further marginalization of those already most negatively affected by capitalism, settler-colonialism, and patriarchy (Giroux, 2004, p. 494). Often, however, these calls to action for youth to “get involved” in groups resisting these realities are not accompanied by intentional, affirming spaces where youth can learn what their involvement can look like.

The summer of 2014 marked the fifth annual Generating Momentum: Activist Leadership Training Camp, our attempt at creating such a space. This four-day, province-wide camp began in the summer of 2010, when the Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation (SCIC) and the Regina Public Interest Research Group (RPIRG) joined forces to strategize around how to educate, train, and organize a movement of young leaders working for social and environmental justice in Saskatchewan. “GenMo” (as it is lovingly known), builds knowledge and skills around environmental justice, feminism, Indigenous rights, global poverty, queer activism, homelessness, food sovereignty, and more, with the goal of bringing people together from multiple areas, including students, grassroots groups, unions, and non-profit organizations.

To educate, train, and organize a movement of young leaders working for social and environmental justice in Saskatchewan.

The camp attempts to focus on both specific issues and on the interconnections that every struggle for justice has (or ought to have) with other struggles. With this in mind, the four days are packed with workshops that vary from year to year (depending on current events and participants’ interests), on topics such as ‘Sexuality, Gender, and Allyship’, ‘Indigenous Food Sovereignty’, ‘Pipelines, Tar Sands, and Fracking’. In addition, sessions are coordinated
that focus on broad-based activism, organizing skills, and theories, in order to draw links between theory and action. These sessions have included: ‘How Change Happens’, ‘Creative Campaign and Tactic Planning’, ‘Activism 101’, and ‘Organizing for Organizers’. Nested in the schedule, there is also time for people to swim, laugh, canoe, connect, sing, and nap!

Generating Momentum is unique in a few ways, and we have learned innumerable lessons from hosting the camp over the last five years. Throughout this article we will explore some of these lessons, which are tied to what we believe are three essential ingredients of GenMo’s success, in the hopes that others may share in our learning. First, we will discuss our experiences with youth-led organizing: GenMo is an activist camp for youth organized by youth. Second, we will illustrate our approach to cultivating praxis (informed, committed action and reflection) amongst the people who attend. Third, we will touch on issues stemming from the fact that the camp has few equivalents in terms of mandate and format – consequently, it’s hard to know if it is “working” or not (and this might be okay!).

AN INTENTIONAL YOUTH SPACE, ORGANIZED BY YOUTH

The camp is envisioned to serve a specific age demographic: people between ages 18 and 30. To date, it has also been organized by people in this age range. Some years, as few as two or three people were behind the camp, and other years, as many as 15 people made up the organizing committee and core team members. This youth-led model facilitates imaginative opportunities for programming and workshops, but it also comes with a steep learning curve about the realities of organizing. The choice to create a space exclusively for youth was purposeful; cynicism and defeatism are learned attitudes, and can be harmful when encountered repeatedly by people who are starting out on their activist journeys. We also wanted to avoid workshops devolving into familiar deflating refrains of “we tried that and it didn’t work” and “do it this way”. This is not to be agent, or to say that we didn’t source experienced facilitators (including people over the age of 30). However, our goal was to try and cultivate a safe space for youth to think creatively, and to form a community where youth could meet other youth who shared their passions and curiosities. In doing so, we wanted to value and affirm the experiences and knowledge of youth who attended, including both their lived experiences of some of the issues the camp deals with and their knowledge around working to address these issues in their communities.

This model, however, comes with its drawbacks. The biggest one is clear – there is a lack of opportunities for intergenerational learning, and the potential for building relationships with potential mentors are constricted. For a generation of people who weren’t alive when some of the most significant social gains were made through the force of social movements, it can be hard to envision what success in our work and campaigns will look like. The guiding wisdom of those who have these memories and experiences can be hopeful and instructive, even if the grips of neoliberalism are far more tight than they were in past generations, and may necessarily require different strategies.

WORKING FOR/FROM INCLUSIVITY

A second challenge to our camp model is one that many groups who are doing community organizing work face: affirming the importance of the diversity of issues that people are working on, while also trying to underscore the interconnectedness of these struggles through an informed level of critical analysis. We (the line between participants and the people making programming choices is sometimes blurry) are not experts on every issue, and we don’t all classify our work and beliefs under the same banners (whether these be socialist, eco-feminist, anti-racist, etc.). These concepts/standpoints come with languages that are at once helpful but can also be exclusive. What some people have come to understand, through life experience, to be the effects of structures of oppression and inequality may not be expressed in the ways that people with more academic backgrounds expect them to be. Those who work to improve services and create safe spaces for women and trans* people, for example, may not identify as battling heteropatriarchy, just as those who do front-line work at anti-poverty organizations may not classify that work as partly dealing with the ongoing effects of settler-colonialism. In the same way, those who can really talk the talk, (that is, those who have studied the structures we struggle within), may be intimidated by the real on-the-ground work associated with making progressive change.

All this is to say, organizing GenMo has sometimes been a fairly daunting task. Perspectives and experiences are not mutually exclusive, but run on a spectrum. We welcomed everyone who gives a shit, and sought to bridge the experiences and knowledge that all people bring. In doing so, we tried to facilitate a process where, as a group, we could identify the common structures that we are working to dismantle, while living, speaking, and acting as models of what kind of structures we want to build. However, some years this process produced a camp that was too theoretically heavy, focusing too much on concepts and the language used to articulate these concepts. Other years, the camp focused too narrowly on skills - training youth to apply specific strategies to their work under the assumption that everyone has studied the structures we struggle within), may be intimidated by the real on-the-ground work associated with making progressive change.

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RESPONSIVE, RELEVANT, AND RELATIONAL

Generating Momentum has few equivalents in format and mandate (the closest comparisons are the Next Up program and union summer camps), which has allowed it to be responsive to the participants and communities it hopes to serve (a thrill but a challenge). From year to year, we tweaked the logistics based on feedback, overhauled some of the programming based on suggestions from participants and facilitators, and took risks with workshops that may or may not have paid off. This responsiveness is only possible through a rooted understanding of how this initiative fits into our local and global historical context and, above all, because of an investment in direct person-to-person relationships. Setting up the structure of the camp without being immersed in the context of local struggles for justice would lead to programming that was ungrounded and abstract (a reality that we struggled with - a lot).

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IT PROBABLY MATTERS

At a time when local and global communities face immense challenges, now, more than ever, there is a need for youth to have community organizing skills in order to turn justice ideals into action. Apart from gaining practical skills and building our knowledge bases together, one of the aims of the camp is to foster relationships and connections. This goal, in particular, is hard to measure, and we have had to rely on anecdotal evidence that a camp such as Generating Momentum is worthwhile. Past facilitators and participants all point to different aspects of the camp as significant, and although we like to think it is our top-notch programming that makes the difference, much of this feedback has been about the space created—time where people can go on walks and talk about the challenges they are facing, a canoe jaunt on the lake that reminds people what they are fighting for, jokes shared over meals that lead to partnerships that last far beyond the four days, and an affirming community that doesn’t pretend to have answers, but is committed to imagining what they might be. Is 70 young people coming together every 12 months changing the social landscapes of our communities? We can’t know for sure, but we maintain that it is worth a shot.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We are facing rampant environmental destruction and resource extraction, the privatization of our public services, the unwillingness of governments to address settler colonialism or respect Indigenous rights, the hollowing out of arts and cultural organizations, and the rise of corporately funded media telling us, youth, that we are powerless to address these challenges. In such circumstances, it is increasingly imperative that we create unified and sustainable partnerships to collectively mobilize and pool local resources, to respond to the needs of our communities, and to demonstrate that the world that we want can be realized. Generating Momentum seeks to create a dynamic, self-reflective, interactive, and creative space where youth gain an understanding of ways to fight all forms of oppression and injustice. None of the challenges that we have encountered in trying to create such a space are new, but we hope to continue working through and addressing such challenges in all the work we do, while taking time to pause and look critically at how we do so. https://generatingmomentumcamp.wordpress.com/

REFERENCES


SPECIES PROFILE

GREAT HORNED OWL

BY BRAD YEE

The photo pictures a juvenile Great Horned Owl, taken in July of 2012. The owl shared an abandoned barn northwest of Regina, with two siblings and its parents. Highly adaptable, GHOs are the most widespread owl in North America, capable of living in various landscapes ranging from deserts and forests to urban environments.

THE PHOTO

Nikon D7000, 70-300mm lens, 1/200 shutter speed, 6.3 aperture, ISO 400, Tripod Mounted

IDENTIFY

• 18-24 inches in length
• “Horned” tufts of feathers on top of the head
• Round disk-shaped face with orange-brown facial feathers and large yellow eyes
• Overall mottled grey-brown coloured plumage
• White throat and chin
• Large and round head
• Colour varies regionally. Some owls are much paler.

The first thing to catch my eye when I spot a Great Horned Owl is the overall shape of the bird. Compared to other large predators such as a Red-tailed Hawk, the GHO looks more round/jump with the head being much larger and having a width closer to its shoulder and body width. If the horn/ear tufts are showing identification is easier as the only other owl in Saskatchewan of this size with prominent ear tufts is the rarely seen Long-eared Owl. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology has detailed online resources to identify and compare birds.

WHERE TO FIND A GREAT HORNED OWL

Great Horned Owls are non-migratory, so you can find them year round. They are nocturnal, making the best times of day for us day dwellers to spot one, dawn and dusk. If you live in the city, it could very well be that a GHO or two is frequenting the urban parks. I would recommend going for drives down grid roads in the evening, during the last hours of daylight. Keep an eye on barn windows and look for birds with large round heads, perched atop electrical poles or other suitable perches. When In a more wooded topography, I tend to find them roosting in trees that border open areas such as shelter belts in fields or trees along a hiking trail, meadow, or marsh.

NESTING

At our latitude, Great Horned Owls can start to seek a mate as early as January. You may hear their lonesome hoots resonating through the ether of dark winter nights. By early march, most will be incubating eggs using old nests of other large birds, or even taking advantage of mammal structures like barns, as did the parents of this individual. The eggs are incubated for approximately 30-37 days. This photo was taken on July 18, so this owl would have been around 4 or 5 months old.

FEEDING

Great Horned Owls are not picky eaters. Although they primarily consume mammals such as rabbits, hares and small rodents, they will also eat other birds (even other owls) reptiles, and invertebrates.

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BY JESSIE BEST AND RANJAN DATTA

The Saskatoon CarShare Cooperative (SCC) is a community driven non-profit initiative that is dedicated to caring for the environment and emphasizes environmental, social, and economic sustainability. CarSharing is a simple and sustainable way for individuals to gain access to vehicles without the costs and responsibilities of vehicle ownership. Instead of owning one or more vehicles, our members have access to a network of shared vehicles 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, at self-service locations. CarSharing encourages the use of mass transit and active transportation, and is an important part of a sustainable urban transportation system.

According to a Government of Canada Report on Emissions Trends in 2012, Saskatchewan has the highest per capita Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Canada, at 69.8 tonnes per person per year. 20% of those emissions come from transportation, which, to a large degree is concentrated in cities. Hoping to improve these emissions trends, many local organizations, including We Are Many (WAM), the Sustainability Education Research Institute (SERI), the Department of Geography and Planning at the University of Saskatchewan, and the Centre for the Study of Cooperatives, have backed SCC. These groups believe that CarSharing is a more sustainable way to get around in the city than exclusively using privately owned, single occupancy vehicles.

As members of SCC, we feel that the Co-op’s presence in Saskatoon builds local capacity by identifying and collaborating with stakeholders, generating innovative ideas, and supporting the development of community volunteer groups. A major role of the SCC coordinator is to work in partnership with people in the community, and offer an affordable and convenient service possible. We believe that grassroots initiatives have the capacity to make powerful changes in Saskatoon, without having to rely on an external agency to make necessary changes for us. There are currently around 11 registered vehicles in Saskatoon per person, an indicator of our reliance on privately owned vehicles. SCC hopes to lower the number of vehicles on the road by complimenting other forms of active and sustainable transportation, such as walking, biking, or taking the bus, to give people a convenient and affordable alternative to car ownership. We also hope to make it easier for everyone to do their part to lower greenhouse gas emissions. The SCC board and coordinator are excited to have welcomed many new members in the last few months. Saskatoon is one of the major hubs in Saskatchewan, and has a huge role to play in lowering greenhouse gas emissions, as well as modelling innovative strategies for reaching that goal. We believe our members will benefit from through:

- Increased connectivity with their neighbours, through shared vehicle ownership
- Increased mobility and convenient service
- Decreased personal transportation costs.

Overall, SCC will benefit the wider Saskatoon community through:

- Reduced demand for parking
- Less congestion on our roads, leading to less wear on our common road infrastructure
- Increase in public transportation use.
- More efficient land use.
- Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle pollution

We welcome residents of Saskatoon to join us and help us make positive changes to our community and help protect our environment.

You can reach us at scc.coordinator@gmail.com, or looking up the SCC website at saskatooncarshare.com.
I was fortunate to attend Keepers of the Water IV, 2010 at Wollaston Lake, Saskatchewan upon the traditional lands of the Hatchet Lake Denesuline First Nation and Keepers of the Water V, 2011 at Lac Brochet, Manitoba, hosted by the Northlands Dene First Nation. These learning experiences among 500 Indigenous peoples and allies had a profound effect on my spirit and “heart” knowledge. My work at the University of Manitoba explored the transformational pedagogies of youth engagement and empowerment and how, as teacher, one may assist in this process of peace and liberation. I have come to know, through my own life experiences with Elders, that learning from and listening to Elders can have a profound impact on your life. And I am certain the gifting of Indigenous knowledge by Elders to youth is something that can make a difference in the sustainability of Mother Earth and her entities. These learning and teaching traditions within a land based pedagogy are critical for the needs of today’s Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth as they come to understand eco-literacy and environmental justice.

Keepers of the Water is comprised of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, environmental groups, concerned watershed citizens and communities across Canada working together for the protection of air, water and land. Elders have voiced their concerns for the health of the Athabasca watershed, which has been successively diminished and the peoples and wildlife reliant upon water sources in the North have incurred significant health issues and mortality. Their references to the flowing waters of Wollaston Lake as “their
And I am certain the gifting of Indigenous knowledge by Elders to youth is something that can make a difference in the sustainability of Mother Earth and her entities.

life” signify the importance of this issue and collectively, they call for solidarity and resistance against development that destroys and depletes this natural resource.

At Keepers of the Water IV I met and talked with Clayton Thomas-Muller, an Aboriginal environmental activist. His Cree roots lie in Manitoba. His words keep me focused on the realities of Indigenous peoples whose lives are dependent on the Athabasca river system: “The tar-sands development around Fort McMurray and Fort McKay is located upstream along the Athabasca River basin. Current tar-sands development has completely altered the Athabasca delta and watershed landscape. This has caused de-forestation of the boreal forests, open-pit mining, de-watering of water systems and watersheds, toxic contamination, disruption of habitats and biodiversity, and disruption of the indigenous Dene, Cree and Métis trap-line cultures” (Thomas-Muller, 2008). Thomas-Muller was among many strong voiced Indigenous peoples speaking out at this conference. I listened to the voices of Elders for a whole afternoon and the next morning and repeatedly, I heard the call for protection and respect of their lifeblood.
The words of these Elders drew my attention to their spiritual connections to these waters and to the interdependency of humanity upon the Earth, her waters and all other living entities. “Water is known as a sacred gift, an essential element that sustains and connects all life” (Keepers of the Water, 2006).

At the conclusion of the Keepers of the Water IV, four resolutions were presented to the membership, and the final resolution was presented by Elders. The significance of this resolution was the call for new vision—a process that would evolve through youth learning about and acquiring traditional ecological knowledge through teachings and land based practices while they shared with and learned from Elders and traditional peoples.

My commitment to this work, to learn more about the physical, emotional and spiritual modalities of water and the knowledges of traditional Aboriginal peoples, and most specifically how these knowledges can be gifted and shared with Canadian youth, was re-fuelled when I was asked to present to Elders and youth at Keepers of the Water V.
“Water is known as a sacred gift, an essential element that sustains and connects all life”

(August 2011) in Lac Brochet, Manitoba. Again, the coming together of many Aboriginal peoples, and a significant number of those from the Denesuline Nation, showed the importance of this mission and the critical state of this earth entity—the Athabasca watershed. This sharing of multiple knowledges, those of Indigenous peoples, Elders, environmentalists, activists, educators and members of communities interested in the protection of Mother Earth and the waters of the Athabasca Watershed signifies the importance of ecological knowledge and environmental stewardship to all Indigenous peoples and to the many others who believe in the sacredness of Mother Earth and her waters.

I urge you to explore Keepers of the Water. Join me in this exploring and sharing and make this your commitment for the New Year.

REFERENCE

A PARENT & TEACHER’S REFLECTIONS ON “WE DAY” HOW CAN A SOCIAL MOVEMENT FEEL SO MEANINGLESS? BY LISA HOWELL

I have just returned from “We Day”, at the Canadian Tire Centre in Ottawa, Ontario. My son, Arya and I woke up early this morning to make the trek out to Kanata with his classmates and teachers. I’ll admit it; we were both excited and a little nervous, but the anticipation for inspiration. Certainly the line-up looked impressive; Martin Luther King Jr’s eldest son (WOW), Spencer West, an incredibly inspiring young man who was born with a disease that took both of his legs, and Shaw A-in-chut Atleo, the AFN National Chief, among others. How could a day like this be anything but informative and uplifting? After all, we grew out of the incredible work of two Canadian brothers, Craig and Marc Kielburger and their organization, Free the Children. Unfortunately, it seems that the intentions behind We Day may have been thwarted by several key issues that caused a concerning juxtaposition between the message and the modus operandi.

RAMTANT CONSUMERISM, CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP & 18,000 LOOT BAGS

The choice of venue was key to the business and political intention of the day: this was not the site for an intimate gathering to celebrate the social actions of youth. No, the intention here was much more grand and deliberate. The 18,000 screaming kids packed into the Canadian Tire Centre were there to do a few key things: to tweet, facebook, and blog about the day as often and exactly as possible; to wave their TELUS flashing lights and to wear their bead chains, t-shirts, cards) and raising money? At the end of the day, the ballot was in there, right under the buy one get one free drink at Second Cup. Is this what activism is? Buying the corporations products (beaded chains, t-shirts, cards) and raising money? At the root, the intentions are good. But as a parent and a teacher, my aspirations for myself, my own kids, and the kids I teach are far more extensive... and engaging. The Merriam-Webster Online dictionary defines activism as: a doctrine or practice that emphasizes direct vigorous action especially in support of or opposition to one side of a controversial issue. No mention of money. No mention of corporate sponsorship. No mention of celebrities and tweets and selfies.

The environment movement argues that it is a human right of all individuals to live in a clean, safe, and healthy environment. This position emphasizes that the world’s poorest and most oppressed people often live in the most toxic environments, which can further impede their social and economic development. Free the Children works in many of these communities, yet the only mention of environment at We Day was delivered passionately by the Aboriginal speakers, Chief Atleo and Waneek Horn-Miller, co-captain of the 2000 Olympic Canadian women’s water polo team. Although, in my opinion, their messages had the most profundity and inherent sense of justice of the day, I wondered how many kids understood the idea of spiritual connection to the land, air and water? Moreover, the concepts of colonization, cultural genocide in Canada? How could they even begin to question the intentions of the Canadian government in terms of aboriginal “policy” when the not so subtle brand of Canadian Nationalism was part and parcel of We Day?

Oh, yes. This day did not just generate an inordinate amount of trash; it also propagated the Grand Canadian Narrative of peace, diversity and acceptance.

HOW TO BE A SOCIAL ACTIVIST? MAKE MONEY AND SEND IT TO US!

I have read about the campaigns that We Day supports, all featured on the “Free the Children” website. Most campaigns aim to get kids involved in an issue, with a goal such as building a well or a school. Which is wonderful. It develops a global perspective, no doubt. The kids then begin a campaign to make money that they then donate to the organization. As far as I can see, kids are the fundraisers for Mark and Craig’s enterprise and money is the key to the enterprise: raise it, buy their products, download their app. And if you happen to have $4,000.00 you can go to China for two weeks and volunteer. If you are a kid who wants to go to China or India but whose parents cannot afford a four thousand dollar two week trip, check your loot bag for a ballot. Yep, you could win a trip. Look, the ballot is in there, right under the buy one get one free drink at Second Cup.

Is this what activism is? Buying the corporations products (beaded chains, t-shirts, cards) and raising money? At the root, the intentions are good. But as a parent and a teacher, my aspirations for myself, my own kids, and the kids I teach are far more extensive... and engaging. The Merriam-Webster Online dictionary defines activism as: a doctrine or practice that emphasizes direct vigorous action especially in support of or opposition to one side of a controversial issue. No mention of money. No mention of corporate sponsorship. No mention of celebrities and tweets and selfies.

Activism is about action. What actions are the youth taking to improve the lives of others besides raising money for Free the Children campaigns? How are they actively engaged in the vigorous support and striving for social change? FILLING THE BUCKET NOT LIGHTING THE FIRE...

As an educator myself, I have had the pleasure of working with students on social justice within the context of both local and global projects. Sure, we have raised money for different organizations that the kids are passionate about. After the horrific BP Oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in April 2010, the kids had a bake sale and donated one hundred dollars to the National Wildlife Federation. After learning about endangered species in our environment club, the kids raised money to “adopt” a polar bear and a panda bear from the World Wildlife Fund. And upon understanding that there was a very serious housing and food crisis in Attauapiskat First Nation in October of 2011, the kids decided to have a food drive. But here is the difference. And there is a profound difference. Free the Children asks kids to sign up to a campaign already started, raise funds and send them to the campaign. In contrast, in each instance I described above, the kids began the campaigns themselves. Each choice came from current issues that the kids felt passionate about. In the case of Attauapiskat, the kids decided to have a food drive at school. However, one Monday morning, two of my students came with three heavy bags of cans. They had gone out in their neighbourhoods to collect food for their “First Nations Neighbours up North.” These students have also participated in events with elders and community members. They have listened and learned from the experts who live in the areas and with the issues. They have met Indian Residential school survivors and reached out in gestures of reconciliation. Rarely has raising funds been part of the equation. Activism is about action, about extending a hand and a heart out to others and about forming opinions and questioning political practices. It is NOT about buying “merch.”

We Day left me drained, exhausted and disillusioned. And believe me, I have a hearty soul. I have marched through heat and rain with hundreds of kids to Parliament Hill for equal education rallies; I have “lived” at school while working with students to prepare for special visits from politicians, activists, elders and Chiefs. My colleagues and I have taken 12 Grade six students on 3 planes to get to a small fly-in First Nation on the shores of James Bay for a week to experience life on a reserve. The difference is that these acts of activism and solidarity left me feeling full, joyous, useful, loved, in-love, blessed, educated and grateful.

What activism and education ought to do is “light a fire,” not merely fill a bucket.

JUST BECAUSE IT IS NOT WRONG, DOESN’T MAKE IT RIGHT

My sons, having rightly pegged me as a social and environmental activist years ago, were shocked at my feelings about We Day. As I began to make sense of the feelings I was having and tried to articulate them, they were incredulous. “Mom, why are you down on We Day?” And “What! MOM is dissing We Day?” Like my sons, I am positive there are many people who believe that I am being far too cynical, definitely judgmental and entirely zealous in my opinions and observations. And perhaps I am. Perhaps We Day and the movement that the brothers began have inspired many youth. I don’t doubt that they have. I am sure that communities have benefitted from the millions of dollars that the kids have raised. And I am certain that many youth have had life-changing experiences on trips to the countries that they are helping. I don’t mean to say that all this is wrong. It’s not. But (and to borrow Barbara Colosimo’s quote) just because it’s not wrong, doesn’t make it right. I don’t think it is right that rampant consumerism, corporate sponsorship, environmental irresponsibility, and patriotism should be part of a social movement for change. And I think more of us need to speak up when something that isn’t wrong, also isn’t right. That’s all.

Craig and Marc Kielburger have done tremendous things in the world and are incredible people. I am not disputing this or claiming that they are not inspirational. I think, though, that perhaps they need to address the contradictions between their message and their actions. Their website maintains that “Me to We is a social enterprise that provides better choices for a better world.” I would argue that from what I saw, heard and felt at We Day, the “better choices for a better world” have vanished under the bright lights and screaming fans of the “enterprise.”
A KIDS’ GUIDE TO CLIMATE CHANGE & GLOBAL WARMING HOW TO TAKE ACTION!

Cathryn Berger Kaye, M.A.

http://www.freespirit.com/workbooks/

A Kids’ Guide to Climate Change & Global Warming teaches about current issues related to climate change, such as:

- carbon footprints
- “footprints” (how the food we consume affects climate change)
- the greenhouse effect
- alternative energies
- deforestation
- water conservation
- severe weather
- the history of environmentalism
- effects of climate change around the world

Kids explore what others in the world (including young people) have done and are doing to address the issues, find out what their community needs, and develop a service project. The workbook includes facts, quotations, real-life examples, write-on pages, resources, a note to adults—and a lot of inspiration to get out there and make a difference in the world. Includes an exclusive interview with Reid Detchon, executive director of Energy and Climate Division of the United Nations Foundation.

THE SUSTAINABLE HIGH SCHOOLS KIT
A Guide to Improving the Guide to Improving the Social and Ecological Well-Being From the Sierra Youth Coalition and The Sierra Club BC Education Program

http://www.sierracanada.org/education/resources/tools/shskit

The Sustainable High Schools Kit is a guide to improving the social and ecological well-being of your school, designed to support high schools involved in the Sustainable High Schools Project. This kit outlines how to bring members of high school communities together to envision, assess and take action to improve their school’s sustainability. This kit provides the tools and resources for students to lead successful classroom projects, policy creation, and infrastructure upgrades that make schools healthier, fairer and more environmentally sustainable.

INspiring Children’s Spirit of Stewardship: A Toolkit for Families

www.worldforumfoundation.org/working-groups/nature/environmental-action-kit/materials/families/

Dear Families, Wherever we live in our world, we know it’s vital that our children grow up to become the next generation of environmental stewards. The best way to protect our environment in the future is to help our children grow up with a love for the earth today. The best way to prepare our children for the world they’re going to inherit is to empower them to become problem solvers and critical thinkers. It’s important to engage our children in conservation activities that focus on positive actions without worrying them about frightening aspects of environmental problems they’re too young to understand. The activities in this Toolkit (designed for ages 3-8) will suggest fun ways for your family to focus on positive actions you can take together to help the world we share become a “greener” and healthier place.

Available in English, Arabic, and Spanish.
ARTWORK BY CHELSEA TAYLOR FLOOK AND EAGLECLAW THOM

This hand silkscreened poster series was created in the lead up to the Meeting of the Premiers in Quebec City, 2015. The only item on their agenda for discussion was climate change.

As calls were issued across Canada to go to Quebec City and participate in actions around the meeting, the idea of a poster campaign was born. It was intended as a way for people to take action in their community, calling on their Premiers from their home province to commit to reducing climate change emissions.

Hundreds of posters were mailed to 12 different cities across Canada, and deployment teams went about posterizing them up and sending in photos as well as sharing them across social media.