



McGill School of Environment

www.mcgill.ca/mse

Fall 2008



Marilyn Scott, Director of the MSE

Director's Message

It was the spring of 1996 when I received an email that would change the direction of my career. I was on sabbatical, and consequently ignoring most emails, but for some reason, I opened one from the then Dean of the Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences who was looking for members for a committee to discuss an interfaculty initiative in environment. Who would have predicted that 12 years later, I, a parasite ecologist, would be asked to be Director of a School of Environment! Each day we are faced with choices and each day we make decisions. That choice back in the spring of 1996 to join that committee was a decision that had a profound effect on me. And, I would argue, choosing

to engage with the McGill School of Environment (MSE) profoundly influences all who make that choice.

So what is it about the MSE? It's the opportunity to learn about so many things that draw you out of a traditional discipline into a whirlwind of intellectual exchange. Imagine a parasitologist (someone who studies worms that live in the intestine of children and other mammals) participating in discussions among philosophers, urban planners and lawyers. Imagine the excitement of thinking of a new way of teaching – teaching where students learn that there are different perspectives on “the facts”. Imagine the opportunity of developing a new way of looking at graduate training, one that highlights learning at the intersection of the human and natural environments. And, perhaps most importantly, imagine the chance to engage with a fantastic group of professors and students, friends and alumni, who REALLY want to make a lasting difference in our planet.

The challenges imposed by global scale deterioration in our environment cannot be understated. If we are to move forward, we need the assistance of everyone! No idea is too strange, no question too foolish! Over the next 5 years, the MSE will be developing new field opportunities for our undergraduates, we will establish new graduate degrees in Environment, we will pursue a research agenda that will enable society to make optimal environmental choices, ones that recognize the diversity of worldviews, and that enable us to sustain both healthy societies and a flourishing biosphere. We will do our part, no – we will do more than our part - to promote environmental literacy and numeracy among all students, staff, faculty and alumni of McGill University, and of citizens of the Earth.

As we enter into the festive season, may we all be ever conscious of our own responsibility to our neighbors near and far, present and future, and to the Earth that sustains our very existence.

From Marilyn Scott, written on a VERY COLD shuttle, traveling from the Macdonald Campus to the Downtown Campus!

The MSE is:

Director—Marilyn Scott

Faculty Members

Madhav Badami (School of Urban Planning)
Elena Bennett (Natural Resource Sciences)
Peter G. Brown (Geography)
Colin Chapman (Anthropology)
Sylvie de Blois (Plant Science)
Jaye Ellis (Faculty of Law)
Frédéric Fabry (Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences)
Iwao Hirose (Philosophy)
Brian Leung (Biology)
Gregory Mikkelsen (Philosophy)
Garry Peterson (Geography)
Anthony Ricciardi (Redpath Museum)
Raja Sengupta (Geography)
Renée Sieber (Geography)
Ismael Vaccaro (Anthropology)

Faculty Lecturers

Colin Duncan
George McCourt
Joan Marshall
Kathryn Roulet

Staff

Shannon Scott
Danielle Lefebvre
Christina Zhu

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The Face of Food Security

Dispatches from the Faculty of Agriculture and Environmental Science's Conference on Global Food Security

by Hilary Best, BA (Hons) Geography, Double Minors in Environment and Economics

In his stirring opening remarks to McGill's first Global Food Security Conference, Kanayo F. Nwanze, Vice-President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development, presented the enormous challenges facing the world today. A perfect storm of food, financial and climate crises are undermining our ability to achieve the UN's Millennium Development Goals while reversing the progress the international community has made thus far. A complex tangle of environmental, economic, social and political concerns, food security has risen to the top of government and academic agendas as an issue demanding immediate attention.



Kanayo F. Nwanze, Vice-President, International Fund for Agricultural Development

Lead by the Faculty of Agriculture and Environmental Science, the conference brought together researchers, public officials, corporate figures and students to take up the keynote speaker's challenge: "to find a face for food security".

Over the course of the two-day conference, speakers from many different sectors spoke of the importance of global engagement and action in meeting the goal of food security. Dean and Conference Co-Chair Chandra Madramootoo spoke of the need to build resilience in vulnerable communities through re-investment in agriculture and capacity building amongst the world's poor. A tall order, given that the problems contributing to food insecurity are often systemic and extremely complicated. But McGill Professor and Former Prime Minister Joe Clark encouraged delegates:

"We've built some momentum here; the challenge for us is to build on this momentum."

One of the most promising paths forward, Mr. Clark suggested, is a "paradigm shove" towards vital interdisciplinarity. Several other speakers at the conference took up this call in their own remarks, including Nicholas Kasirer, Dean of the Faculty of Law. "The issue of food security requires a re-configuration of the usual structures of thought that organize our intellectual lives...There is a pressing need to



Rt. Hon. Joe Clark, McGill Centre for Developing-Area Studies



Her Excellency Judith Mbula Bahemuka, Kenya High Commissioner to Canada

understand the dialogue between disciplines." He stressed the need for interdisciplinary scholars from biology, health, engineering, public policy, gender studies, agriculture, economics and environment to make essential contributions towards the meaningful integration of advanced thought.

"Do we have the courage as scholars," Dean Kasirer asked, "to leave not just the comfort zones of our faculties and our offices, but the comfort of the constructs, methods and ideas that typically structure the way in which we work? The structures of university life and governance must change to address the food security crisis."



Chandra Madramootoo, Dean, Faculty of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, McGill University

MSE students in attendance were eager to take up this challenge. Andra Syvanen, U3

Environment & Development, was excited by the ideas presented, "Conferences like this are important in that they bring together so many different perspectives. It is really im-

portant that the action doesn't stop here.

Further details on the conference and its speakers can be obtained at this website: <http://www.mcgill.ca/globalfoodsecurity/>.

Inaugural Woo Water Lecture

Hydrology and Biogeochemistry of Ecosystems - their Dynamic Coupling in Northern Peatlands

by Nigel Roulet, Professor, Department of Geography

Nigel Roulet, former Director and Associate Member of the MSE, gave the **Inaugural Woo Water Lecture** entitled, "Hydrology and Biogeochemistry of Ecosystems - their Dynamic Coupling in Northern Peatlands", at McMaster University on November 19, 2008. This lecture series has been created to honour the career of Professor Ming-Ko Woo (Geography, McMaster University), one of the world's leading permafrost hydrologists. In 2007, Professor Woo was awarded the J. Tuzo Wilson medal of the Canadian Geophysical Union.



Dr. Ming-Ko Woo, Professor Emeritus, School of Geography and Earth Sciences, McMaster University

Nigel also was the guest speaker at a University of the Streets Cafe (Oct. 27) and the Women's Canadian Club of Montreal (Nov. 17) where he talked on censoring science, sustainability and the economic crisis as a "green" opportunity. Nigel has also begun a three year term as the Group Chair for Environmental Sciences of NSERC grants and scholarships. As Group Chair he represents the environmental sciences at the NSERC Committee on Grants and Scholarships (COGS).

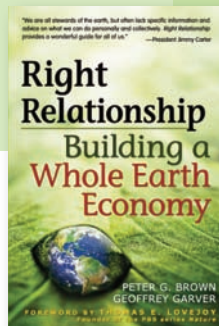
**They teach,
they research,
they write books!**

Don't miss these upcoming books from our very own MSE professors...

Joan Marshall, MSE
"Tides of Change on Grand Manan Island: Culture and Belonging in a Fishing Community", currently in print.



Peter Brown, Dept. of Geography and the MSE
"Right Relationship: Building a Whole Earth Economy", currently in print.



Challenges Continue with the TD GO GREEN CHALLENGE

Urban Sustainability, by Michelle Haddad, UTours Account Coordinator, TD Friends of the Environment Foundation

This year, the theme of the contest is Urban Sustainability. Open to Canadian university and college students, the challenge requires a maximum 4,000 word essay with creative, workable plans for promoting greener communities. The four winning teams each receive \$25,000 for their green ideas and recognition as a future green leader within the community.



Look where ENVR 401 can take you!

The Wemindji-Paakumshumwaau Project: Environment, Development and Sustainability in a James Bay Cree Community

by Katherine Scott, Project Administrator, Wemindji-Paakumshumwaau Project, Centre for Society, Technology & Development, McGill University

Our project originated as a partnership between the Cree Nation of Wemindji on the coast of James Bay in Northern Quebec and an interdisciplinary team of researchers associated with the McGill School of Environment, including researchers at Concordia University, the University of British Columbia and the University of Manitoba. It also includes as partners, the Grand Council of the Cree (Eeyou



Photo taken by Martina Milligan

Zohrin Jivraj, MA, Concordia University, and Stacy Matches, Research Assistant, Wemindji Project, paddling the north end of Maatuskaau River

Istchee), Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Ministère de l'Environnement du Québec. Led by McGill

Anthropology

Professor Colin H. Scott, this initiative is mainly supported by a Community-University Research Alliance grant of the SSHRC. It is a project that involves dozens of Wemindji community members and leaders, 11 professors, and over 15 graduate students.

The first goal of this project is to find ways in which Wemindji Cree can

protect significant parts of their land through the creation of a biodiversity reserve that rests on Cree authority and stewardship. the Paakumshumwaau-Maatuskaau area, the name of the proposed biodiversity reserve, is an ecologically rich and diverse boreal habitat that is a central Wemindji cultural

heritage. The biodiversity reserve will be a model for anchoring land and sea management in indigenous institutions of ecological knowledge and stewardship. It is also an area rich in cultural and historical uniqueness as it is this area in which Cree and Inuit cultures meet and interact, and has recently through archaeological digs been revealed as a place of continuous human occupation for over 3500 years!

As recently as last week the Ministère du Développement Durable de l'Environnement et des Parcs generated good news as it added the Paakumshumwaau biodiversity reserve proposal to its list of planned protected areas. This area is its largest area set for biodiversity reserve designation under the Stratégie sur les aires protégées.

This initiative is an opportunity for intergovernmental collaboration to protect a precious and unique ecology of land and sea interactions spanning Cree, Quebec, Nunavut and Canadian jurisdictions.

www.wemindjiprotectedarea.org



Photo courtesy of Prof. Colin Scott

Paakumshumwaashtikw - Old Factory River Estuary



Photo taken by Erica Crawford

ENVR 401: Aa-wiichaautuwiikkw: Creating a culturally appropriate watershed and adjacent marine coastal protected area in Paakumsimuwaau (Old Factory) Wemindji, James Bay, Quebec Summer 2003



We are celebrating the McGill School of Environment's 10th year.

The MSE has grown from a dream in a few faculty members' minds into a significant undergraduate program, a developing graduate program, and a collection of very motivated, bright young academics all striving to give our students the best possible environmental education.

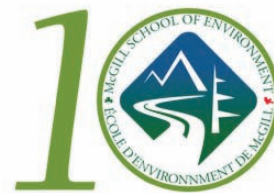
Nous fêtons les 10 ans de l'École d'environnement de McGill.

L'École d'environnement de McGill est née du rêve de quelques professeurs de l'important programme de 1er cycle et des programmes d'études supérieures en développement ainsi que d'un groupe de jeunes universitaires doués et motivés, s'efforçant tous de donner la meilleure éducation environnementale possible à nos étudiants.

We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the many people who helped to make our MSE celebrations around Homecoming, October 17-19, 2008, so successful.

Thank you! Merci!

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And the 2nd prize for Earth System Science goes to...Lichens!

Regional Offices of the WHO and Conservation International, Washington DC

by Raiza Mirza, BA (Hons), International Development Studies

On Friday, October 17, 2008, students from across the Faculty of Science presented their research projects at the fourth annual **Undergraduate Research Conference (URC)**. The URC took place during the Homecoming 2008 events in the lobby of McGill's historic Arts Building. Moyse Hall was packed with over 200 people, forty-one of which were participating students. The spectrum of research projects ran the gamut from social sciences to pure sciences to environmental sciences.

Environmental students won second prize in the Earth System Science category: Laura Boisvert-Marsh, B.Sc. (Agr. & Env. Sci.) Environment; Heather Coffey, B.A. & Sc. '08 (Hon) Environment minor in Geography (Urban Systems) and Anthropology; and Anne Giulietti, B.Sc. Environment. Their project was entitled, "Exploring Lichen Diversity in Conservation", supervised by Professor Sylvie de Blois of the Department of Plant Science and the McGill School of Environment.

The MSE congratulates Laura, Anne and Heather!

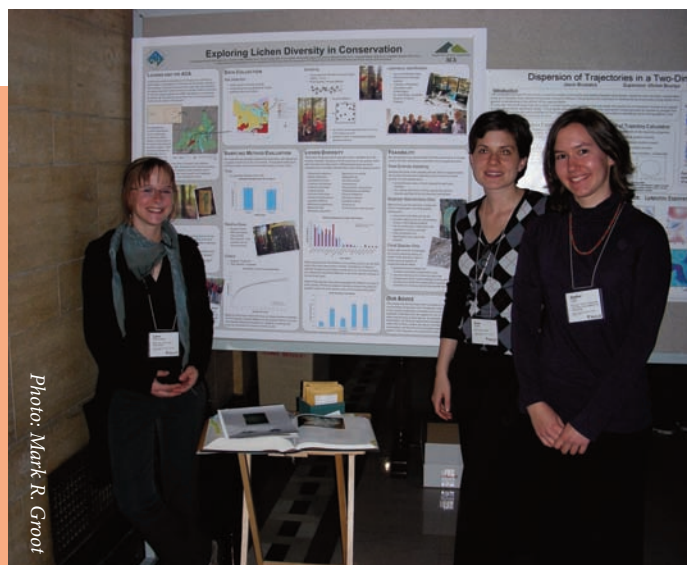


Photo: Mark R. Groot

Prize Winners from left to right:
Laura Boisvert-Marsh,
Anne Giulietti,
and Heather Coffey.





Photo taken by Nicolas Morin

Dr. James Gustave Speth, Carl W. Knobloch, Jr. Dean of the School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, and Sara Shallenberger Brown Professor in the Practice of Environmental Policy, Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies

Building the Bridge: Reflections on this year's Beatty Lecturer, Dr. James Gustave Speth

"All we have to do to ruin the planet is to keep doing exactly what we're doing today."

by Hilary Best, BA (Hons) Geography, Double Minors in Environment and Economics

It's hard to look into the experienced eyes of one of the today's greatest environmental leaders and hearing the troubling reality: "All we have to do to ruin the planet is to keep doing exactly what we're doing today. Just keep releasing greenhouse gases and toxics at the current rates, just continue impoverishing ecosystems and in the latter part of this century, this will be a different planet, a ruined planet."

While Dr. James Gustav Speth, Dean of the Faculty of Environmental Studies (FES) at Yale University, certainly offered a sobering reality to faculty, students and alumni during his visit to McGill in October, this year's Beatty lecturer was far from demoralizing. As co-founder of the Natural Resources Defense Council, environmental advisor to two US administrations and Chair of the United Nations Development Programme, Dr. Speth has been an inspirational leader in the environmental movement for decades. But in spite of his monumental efforts, he's not sure it has made a difference.

"It's been like swimming upstream. We've gotten stronger in the environmental movement but so has the current. Our organizations are better funded and more sophisticated, and we're still losing." In Speth's view, the movement has been prisoner of the wider system for too long: "Under Reagan, the world turned but we kept doing what we had been doing. We didn't get political. We didn't go into communities and organize. We were a lot more comfortable talking with the agencies and their staffs than we were in figuring out how to build up a major popular constituency. We stayed in our environmental silo." In his lectures and discussions with MSE students and faculty, Speth emphasized the need for a paradigm shift in the environmental movement and indeed society as a whole.

One of the first places for such a shift to find groundswells of support is in academic institutions. At the MSE roundtable with Dr. Speth, Professor Elena Bennett asked about the role for universities in promoting societal change. Speth shared participant's doubts that universities are leading the charge.

Universities, he argued, are risk averse and need to be prodded in the right direction by their visionary students and faculty. Speaking of drafting the FES's progressive mission statement, Speth lamented that university administrators had instructed him to "deep six the whole thing because we don't believe things in academia". Speth expressed his frustration with the ivory tower's inability to mount an adequate response to the problem at hand and he instructed all of those present to lend their voices to the cause.

With the formidable challenges clearly laid out by a veritable environmental prophet, what is an MSE student to do? Dean Speth's advice was clear: "get very political". Advocating for a massive unification of citizens concerned about democracy, social justice and environmental concerns, Speth is spending his last year as Dean of FES challenging the status quo.

In his Beatty address, Speth quoted an unlikely bedfellow, Milton Friedman, who said, "only a crisis produces real change". If the current financial turmoil is any indication, the world may finally be ready to heed Speth's call to action. Our hope rests on a decade's worth of passionate MSE graduates ready to take up the charge.



Photo taken by Nicolas Morin

Nigel Roulet introduces Dr. James Speth.



Click on the Environment: Classes without Quizzes!

“How to talk back to your professors.”

by Hilary Best, B.A. (Hons) Geography, double Minors in Environment and Economics

Nothing gets students quite as excited as the chance to talk back to their professors.

Which is why it comes as no surprise that the Click on the Environment session of Classes Without Quizzes at Macdonald Campus this October was such a success. Alumni, students and staff gathered, with clickers in hand, to discuss the key environmental issues we face with some of Mac Campus's most enthusiastic MSE professors.

“Some of the things we raised are issues that Canadians aren't necessarily aware of,” said panelist, George McCourt. Joined by Elena Bennett and Don Smith, the professors took to the lectern to engage the audience with the crucial issues they work on and have some fun in the process.

To the average Canadian, the signs of environmental decline may not be immediately obvious, so how do we know that we're in trouble?

“The reason we think there are climate problems is because we have things from the past that tell us that things now are not great,” explains McCourt.

Based on his work with paleoclimatic reconstructions, Professor McCourt looks to the past to provide a window to the present.



George McCourt, MSE Faculty Lecturer and recent recipient of the McGill University Principal's Award for Excellence in Teaching, speaks with Angio Liu, alumni who did his Ph.D. degree under the supervision of Chantal Hamel, Natural Resource Science

Many of our environmental problems are a short-circuiting of geologic processes. We're interrupting those cycles and asking short term cycles, like the carbon cycle, to deal with it”.

Asking the audience to compare the current atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide to pre-industrial levels, McCourt proves his point: “That's where I see the connection: making people realize that these processes go on in very slow geologic time frames and nature adapts to them. Now, we're changing them rapidly.”

Which is where Professor Smith's research comes in. Finding a solution to these problems requires innovative approaches



Don Smith, James McGill Professor and Chair, Department of Plant Science

to the most essential human activities and on this score, Smith is leading the charge. “My work focuses on making crops grow better with bio-fertilizers. Improved plant growth presents some nice possibilities.” Working towards greater productivity with less energy-intensive inputs, Smith says crops grown in this manner have carbon sequestration potential and may play a role as biofuels.

According to Smith, this approach “can make the whole system work a lot better”. Smith is cautious about the potential for soil degradation and the conflict between biofuels and food – issues that have

received a great deal of attention over the past year. He underscores the importance of recognizing interconnections within the system.

It's these inter-connections that stimulate Professor Bennett's research. “As human population grows, the expectation by the experts is that we have to double our food production.

So we know that we have to get better at it, but we also know that most of our efforts to increase food production have resulted in environmental damage and increased costs.”

Bennett sees it as a question of balancing the interactions between ecosystem services. “For every interaction that we know how it works, there are multiple interactions that we don't know understand. And so the question isn't even how do we deal with interactions that we know exist, it's how do we deal with interactions that we don't even know about.”

As we move into an era of increasing demands on stressed ecosystems, Bennett remains hopeful that we can reduce tradeoffs between services and create synergies.

While the group of enthusiastic professors certainly gave the audience their chance to talk back, Click on the Environment offered up a great deal more. The professors underscore the importance of the exciting interdisciplinary work at the MSE and emphasized the need for more meeting of the minds as we move forward.



Elena Bennett, Professor, MSE and Natural Resource Science

Photo taken by Owen Egan



Communicating Climate Change: Bringing Scientists and Journalists to the Table

”Clear as Carbon Dioxide?”

by Hilary Best, BA (Hons) Geography, Double Minors in Environment and Economics

The latest report of the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change** reported with “very high confidence [at least a nine out of ten chance of being correct] that the global average net effect of human activities since 1750 has been one of warming, with a radiative forcing of +1.6 [+0.6 to +2.4] W / m²”.

Clear as carbon dioxide?



Photo taken by Nicolas Morin

Left to right: Bruno Tremblay, Chris Mooney, Dean Martin Grant, Nigel Roulet, and Peter Calamai

In a time when complex climate research has enormous implications for the non-scientific among us, scientists find themselves struggling to be understood in a strange new world: the media.

With this in mind, this year’s Homecoming brought together an impressive panel of scientists and journalists to discuss the challenge of communicating climate change in the 21st century. At the MSE, faculty and students engaged in a roundtable discussion with visiting journalists Chris Mooney, author of *Storm World: Hurricanes, Politics, and the Battle Over Global Warming*, and Peter Calamai, former science reporter for the Toronto Star. Later, they were joined by McGill Professors, Nigel Roulet (MSE and Geography) and Bruno Tremblay (Atmospheric and Oceanic Science), as well as Dean of Science Martin Grant, for another lively installation of Classes Without Quizzes.

Tremblay and Roulet made a valiant attempt to explain their work in layman’s terms. “The models we work on are mathematical representations of every single component of climate system,” said Tremblay. Running these models a number of times creates a range of expected temperature values given certain levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide. Roulet’s work adds further

uncertainty to the mix by accounting for the biogeochemical feedbacks that may accompany changes in the physical system.

For all of their complexity, how closely do these models approximate reality? Tremblay conceded, “reality is happening faster than our models predicted and it is the rapidity at which climate is changing that is of greatest concern”.

Amidst this increasing scientific complexity, media coverage of science is being simplified in the extreme. Mooney pointed to a 2006 study which found that from 1989 to 2005, the number of papers featuring weekly science sections shrank by nearly two-thirds – a trend replicated across print media, radio and television. “Getting science across is more difficult than ever before and yet it has never been more important,” said Mooney. Attributing this situation partly to the increasing fragmentation of a corporatized media, he also suggested the need for improved dialogue between scientists and journalists – a mission he and Peter Calamai are each championing in the US and Canada, respectively.

Both journalists advocate for the need to articulate a new climate change narrative, targeted to the audiences that needed to be reached. Mooney applauded recent success in the US in engaging the Evangelical Christian community by framing climate change as an affront to God’s creation.

Dean Grant wondered where those in the scientific community should draw the line between informed advocacy, to motivate the populace into action, and informed even-handedness, to preserve professional integrity.

Roulet advocated for a measured approach: “It’s not for scientists to say what is the correct solution to the problem, but I do think it is important for us to outline the issues so that the level of discussion is brought up”.

Tremblay summed up the panel’s discussion nicely when he suggested that scientists and journalists have a collective responsibility to “educate the public and put a face on climate change, such that we can make an informed decision.” Now, more than ever, we need these two groups to work effectively together.



Photo taken by Nicolas Morin

Dean Martin Grant, Chris Mooney, Ann Vroom, Bruno Tremblay, Peter Calamai, and Nigel Roulet



An Internship at the Pan American Health Organization

Regional Offices of the WHO and Conservation International, Washington DC

by Raiza Mirza, BA (Hons), International Development Studies



I feel really lucky to have had the opportunity to undertake two internships within the Environment sector at the same time, in two completely different industries with two different outcomes, this summer. This is especially important as it allows me to compare what type of work I truly enjoy doing and has given me many contacts within the environmental industry. I work 3 days a week at the **Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)** within the Sustainable Development and Environmental Health (SDE) Unit, on reports regarding the health effects of Climate Change in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. These reports detail how each country is faring with regards to vulnerability, research, future trends in disease, National Plans and Programs.

For 2 days a week, I work at **Conservation International**, a conservation NGO, within the Centre for Environmental Leadership in Business (CELB), as a Biofuels researcher. I have researched land classification schemes for degraded land and degraded land agricultural practices around the world. Right now, I am working on the Palm Oil Market in China and India and the major players. CELB wants to work with the key players in the industry to try and get them to adopt environmentally sustainable methods of growing palm oil and to approach them to adhere to the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) Standards. I am definitely reconsidering my career choices as a result of this internship.



Presenting the MSE at the 14th Interdisciplinary Environmental Association Conference on the Environment

Edmonton, Alberta - June 30 to July 3, 2008

by Katie Beardsley, BA Ecological Determinants of Health

The **Interdisciplinary Environmental Association** hosts an annual international conference for academics, students, and the public. The 3 day conference took place in Edmonton at the end of June. This year, my U3 independent study - an assessment of student vs. professor perceptions of the quality of education within the MSE - was part of the poster presentations. The focus of both the association and the conference is interdisciplinarity – fostering communication between academics of all disciplines and emphasizing the importance of examining environmental issues through a variety of lenses. My project fit well with this year's Special Topic, which was Accreditation of Environmental Education Programs.

My presentation thesis was that ongoing consultation with professors and students is a valuable tool to help administrators deliver challenging and meaningful environmental programs to their students. My argument was based on the results of surveys and interviews conducted with MSE professors and students. Results showed that students and professors take great pride in many aspects of the MSE and also have a lot of interest in working to improve the quality of education at the school. Encouragingly, I found that professors and students have similar perceptions of the quality of education at the MSE (shown by the fact that both groups identified the same top 3 strengths and weaknesses for the school). My poster was well-received by the conference participants, many of whom are in the process of creating independent environmental departments at their home universities. They were impressed by the innovative structure of the MSE and curious to see what opinions MSE students and professors had expressed. Overall, the high participation rate, the insightful ideas expressed by students and professors, and the opportunity of presenting to the IEA have made this a rewarding project for me.





U21 Undergraduate Research Conference,

National University of Singapore, from June 30-July 5, 2008, by *Alexandre Poisson*

I just came back from my trip to Singapore and Southeast Asia last week, for the U21 Undergraduate Research Conference on “Sustainability”, hosted by the **National University of Singapore (NUS)** - <http://www.universitas21.com/URC.html>.



Campus Sustainability - Harmonizing Ends and Means on Research-Intensity and Energy, by Alexandre Poisson, McGill School of Environment

There were 50 students, from 14 different Universities, McGill being the only Canadian University attending (the two other McGill students attending were Nicolas Brochu, and Heather Unger, from the Faculty of Law). There were students from Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, England, Scotland, Japan, Korea, China, and Singapore. Oh yes, and the United States. All the NUS students were asked to be leaders of small groups, for orientation and tours, to mix up regions. It was great to get to know so many people from different parts of the world. I think that was the best part. Friendships were easily made.

The research presentation (40) and posters (10) were extremely varied, and everyone appreciated the exposure to so many disciplines. The “sustainability” theme tied everything together, but from many different perspectives. That was also an eye opener for many. Lots of people left the conference with an added sense of responsibility to the planet and an interest for other disciplines.

Topics included: “Solar Photo-catalytic Water Purification”, “Synthesis and Characterization of High Capacity Hydrogen Storage Materials”, “The Role of Precautionary Principle in Environmental Decision Making”, “Factors Influencing Public Acceptance of Congestion Charging”, “Social Psychology of Environmental Decision: Water Recycling in Australia”, “Designing Sustainable Architecture” and most importantly “Sustaining Love”.

My own presentation:

Prof. Garry Peterson gave me a good idea to add to my presentation (otherwise on campus sustainability metrics) right before leaving: “show how the urban system cycles back into the ecosystem”, and so on. So I ended up estimating McGill’s “carbon footprint”.

Thank you so much for this great opportunity!

Alex

To find out more, please go to: www.mcgill.ca/files/rethink/APoissonMonitoringAssessingReporting.pps



Photos taken by Alex and friends.



*Nicholas Brochu,
Heather Unger,
Alexandre Poisson*



*Alex and "Ent Tree Friend" at Ta Prohm Temple,
Angkor, Cambodia*



Introducing a new way to obtain credit: MSE Fields Trips

The MSE is proud to sponsor professor-initiated and coordinated field trips which students can take for one-credit, or simply attend the trips for personal interest. This is a novel way of learning about the environment, its regional history and people, and at the same time enjoying the autumn colors.

Historical & Environmental Change in Monteregie, especially related to Water and Agriculture

by Joan Marshall, Ph.D., MSE Faculty Lecturer

Twenty students from the MSE didn't let the cold biting winds of early autumn deter them as they arrived for the first of two field trips on October 4, leaving from the Macdonald Campus at 9:00 am. As the photos suggest, the trips involved a variety of sites and the possibility to talk with people engaged in agricultural and tourism pursuits in the region, and to explore the ways in which canal building have transformed our physical and economic landscapes. Workshops on the day preceding each trip helped to provide a geographical and historical context for the landscape changes and water diversions that they would be seeing the next day. Topographic map sheets and readings that included Bouchette's *A Topographical Description of the Province of Lower Canada* (1815) encouraged students to explore the importance of regional relationships through time so that the field trips were relevant to both current and past landscape and environmental changes.

It seems that students appreciated the opportunity to engage with more experiential learning that incorporated a variety of environmental and historical perspectives on landscape change. Hopefully we will be able to introduce other topics (such as political and community issues) in future years.



Jacques Seguin, owner of "Les Beaux Bisons" (above) in Rigaud, near Pte-Fortune, speaking with Sophie Johnson (left)



Left to right: Alexis Thorbieke, Ellen Wakarchuk, Kryptja Glavinovic, Annie Gauthier, Dan Brisebois - founder of Tourne-Sol, Adele Michaud, Abbigail Spencer, and Andreanu Lussier

The MSE has a new member in the Family!

Please welcome Hilary Best, our MSE Journalist.

Hilary is a U3 Honours Geography student, minoring in Environment and Economics. her thesis research focuses on an ecological economics analysis of Ontario's urban growth policies. When she's not studying the environment, she enjoys being out in it - canoeing, hiking, and birding - as much as possible. She is delighted to be writing for the MSE this year.

Don't forget to go to our new MSE Blog, which Hilary established and is maintaining: <http://blogs.mcgill.ca/mse/>



Hilary hiking on the Bruce Trail, Niagara Escarpment, between Niagara Falls and Tobermory.





Kudos

Kathryn Roulet has been appointed as Faculty Lecturer (Undergraduate Academic Advisor) in the MSE. Kathy comes to us from Concordia University, Department of Geography, Planning and Environment, where she was a principal instructor in the graduate Diploma in Environmental Impact Assessment. She brings to the MSE Internship Coordinator and Departmental Curriculum Committee knowledge and expertise.

George McCourt has been appointed as Associate Director (Undergraduate Affairs).

Madhav Badami has been appointed as Associate Director (Graduate Affairs).

Colin Chapman will serve as Associate Director (Research). He will focus his energies on helping the broad MSE community advance on the research front, and explore new ways that our students can gain field experiences.

Chris Buddle of Natural Resource Sciences has been promoted to the rank of Associate Professor with tenure. Chris is an Associate Member of the MSE and has taught in the MSE Honours Program. He is also affiliated with the Neotropical Environment Option (NEO). Chris is an entomologist who specializes in arachnology and tree canopy ecology.

Raja Sengupta has agreed to be the MSE representative on the Faculty of Engineering Environmental Engineering Committee.

Madhav Badami (MSE Joint Professor) has been invited to join the Global Transport Knowledge Partnership which is a global initiative, launched recently with initial funding from the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID), to promote and disseminate knowledge on "sustainable transport" around the world (<http://www.gtkp.com/default.asp>).

*"Your support
helps us to address
the environmental
challenges
of our time"*

