



McGill School of Environment

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THIS ISSUE

“Your support helps us to address the environmental challenges of our time”

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Director’s Message

Professor Marilyn Scott, Director of the McGill School of Environment

Can you believe that we are starting to think about our 15th year Anniversary? Since 1998, the MSE has grown into one of the top transdisciplinary environmental research and teaching schools in Canada. We are proud of nurturing young adults pursuing a career in environment and we are immensely aware of our responsibility to prepare tomorrow’s educators, researchers, policy makers and humanitarians for environmental stewardship and stimulate their passion for life-long learning.

Many of our current initiatives are possible because of gifts provided by our Friends and our Alumni. We have several undergraduate scholarships, we have funds to help undergraduates who participate in field study courses and programs abroad, we have received funding in support of a major public lecture each year, and we have an endowed Chair with associated funding for graduate student fellowships.

As we move toward our 15th Anniversary (2013-2014), we would like to increase philanthropic support for initiatives that we know to be so valuable for our students.

MSE Undergraduate Research Award. A research experience creates original thought, fosters curiosity for a lifetime, and enables life-changing collaborations. McGill School of Environment students build knowledge and competencies to change the world and this helps MSE Professors teach students about the environment beyond the classroom. A one-time gift of \$1000 provides a Research Award for one undergraduate. An endowment of \$25,000 would allow us to provide one award every year.

Undesignated Gifts, Small and Large provide us with the flexibility to respond to requests from undergraduates who have the opportunity to attend national conferences where they present the results of their research, and where they take part in workshops organized for students. It helps us to support our students who organize events at McGill. For example, in 2010 a group of MSE students organized a conference at McGill on water in which they invited internationally renowned experts to speak at the conference that was attended by McGill undergraduates..

Undesignated gifts also help us to fund a part-time student journalist who organizes the MSE Blog and contributes stories to our Newsletter. In the 3 years since we started this initiative, these students have developed their journalistic skills while helping us to share the exciting MSE initiatives with one another and with you.



Graduate Fellowships. Our planning for MSE Graduate Degrees is well advanced, and it would be fantastic to be able to expand our pool of funds for fellowships. Our goal is that all students would have access to fellowship support. An endowment of \$250,000 would provide us with a \$10,000 fellowship per year.

We are grateful for the support that our Alumni and our broader community of “Friends” continue to give us. If you would like to discuss ways in which you might support the MSE, please contact me.

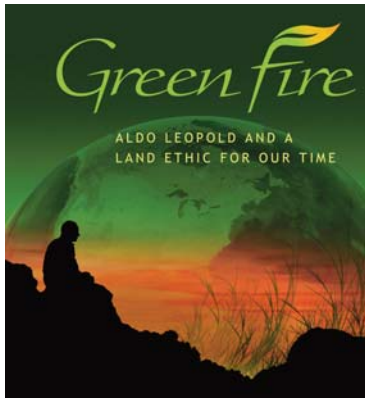
At Spring convocation on May 27, 2011, Marilyn Scott received the “Macdonald Campus Award for Teaching Excellence”.

We are enormously proud to announce that at Fall Convocation on November 23, 2011, she was awarded the “**Principal’s Prize for Excellence in Teaching**”. This prestigious award was established to recognize excellence in teaching and its importance to the academic experience of students at McGill University.

When asked why she teaches, her response reflects why she has won both of these awards. “*My instinctive reaction is to say that I’m not really teaching, I’m promoting learning—and I love it. I’m always intrigued to figure out why students get confused because then I can try to explain things differently. Interacting with students is the most enjoyable thing of all the things I do!*”



Given my goal to foster an interdisciplinary conversation



through this blog, it is fitting that my first interview of the year left me convinced that this is exactly what is needed.

The film *Green Fire* was shown here at McGill by the MSE – its first screening in Canada. I had the chance to speak with Curt Meine, who was a key figure in the creation of the film, and who appears as the film’s on-screen guide.

Green Fire tells the story of Aldo Leopold (1887-1948), who is considered by many to be the founding father of the American conservation movement. But Leopold is not only renowned for his efforts to protect the land and wilderness that he loved; Leopold’s concept of a “land ethic” was monumental in shaping our modern ideas of human relationships with nature. Leopold was the first to emphasize the need for harmony between people and land. He believed that the field of ethics cannot be limited to human-human relationships, but can only be complete when it addresses human-nature relationships as well.

Meine is an expert on Leopold: he wrote the first biography of Leopold for his PhD, and is now a senior fellow at the Aldo Leopold Foundation (just the many hats he wears!). Meine is convinced that Leopold’s story is essential for understanding contemporary environmental issues. “No other figure in our whole history combines so many parts of the big puzzle.” Meine emphasizes the importance of telling the story of the history of environmental ideas, policy and science through one figure. Understanding the history of those who have come before them gives people (especially young people) a sense of background, helping them to feel less lost in the tumultuous, muddled array of discourses they are faced with today. Thus, the film’s originality comes from its unique approach, which is neither entirely historical nor contemporary, but rather seeks to show how knowledge of the past is essential for a true understanding of the issues we face today.

When asked what Leopold would think about how the conservation movement has shifted and grown today, Meine responded positively, saying that “Leopold would be encouraged, if not satisfied.”

--- **Kaitlyn Shannon, MSE Journalist**

For the complete interview:

<http://blogs.mcgill.ca/mse/2011/10/04/green-fire-an-interdisciplinary-approach/>

Kara Shannon is Winner of the \$500 Vivian Lewin Field Studies Award.



Kara is a U2 student doing a B.A major in Environment with a minor in Geography. She is registered in the Environment and Development domain.

Next semester she will be taking part in the Canadian Field Studies in Africa program and will be spending the semester traveling and studying throughout Kenya, Tanzania and Zanzibar. As part of her research project she hopes to interact with and learn from the stakeholders who are working in eastern Africa’s development and management fields. Her project would allow her to see first-hand the attempts to solve the many pressing environmental issues facing this part of Africa. Kara hopes to gain a better understanding of how decision makers combine local knowledge with the knowledge of professionals in the management fields to develop solutions to these increasingly stressful environmental problems that are applicable to the local communities.

Kara is hoping to someday have a career in environmental policy or management and that her experiences and research activities through the Field Studies in Africa program will contribute to the development of her academic and professional knowledge.



By: Ben Harack

Moving Planet was a worldwide event that took place on September 24th, 2011. It was conceived by the folks over at 350.org as an effort to help the world transition away from fossil fuels.

The Moving Planet event in Montreal (which took place in Parc Jeanne-Mance) was planned by local volunteers and a few McGill students. All we got from 350.org was the name and the logos. We did get some very significant help from the David Suzuki Foundation (Montreal chapter) with regards to planning and execution of the event as well as media releases.



Kilometer Drive

The event included what we called a 'kilometer drive' in which people could contribute their green-transport kilometers to a collective total. A green kilometer would be one achieved on foot, bike, skateboard, roller blades, unicycle, etc. The goal of the kilometer drive was to demonstrate the power of active transportation.

Our group achieved a total of 496 kilometers by the end of the day, using some unconventional methods such as:

- Juggling
- Juggling a soccer ball with just feet
- Passing a Frisbee between three people
- Singing
- Hand-in-hand
- In another person's shoes
- Dancing
- Carrying a toddler in 'airplane' position the whole way.

Moving Planet Montreal organizers and friends.

I think it is sufficient to say that we had a great time with the kilometer drive. Next year we think it would be an excellent idea to get active transport groups involved in the planning and execution of the event. Montreal definitely has communities of cyclists, skateboarders, joggers, rollerbladers, etc. We think it is reasonable that some of these groups might be interested in showing off the capabilities (and fun) of their chosen mode of transport.

I like to think of the kilometer drive as a celebration of the tremendous human capability to achieve active transportation. By doing so, we are improving the long-term health of both our environment and ourselves. A transition towards less energy-intensive transportation is a must in the decades to come. It seems extremely unlikely that we as a society will be able to continue to spend such incredible amounts of energy on our personal transportation systems. This seems likely to be true even if we do not factor in the broad and substantial costs of continued fossil fuel usage by our societies.



The MSE welcomes new faculty

Christopher Barrington-Leigh accepted a joint position with the MSE and the Institute for Health and Social Policy.

Originally trained in upper atmospheric and space plasma physics at M.I.T., Stanford, and Berkeley, he subsequently received a PhD in Economics at the University of British Columbia.

Chris' interests are focused on empirical and quantitative assessments of welfare, and their implications for economic, social, and environmental policy, including the pursuit of overall economic growth and material consumption expansion.



Adam Millard-Ball accepted a joint appointment with the MSE and the Department of Geography.



Coming from Stanford University, his research on environmental policy and transportation is interdisciplinary, and spans the fields of geography, environmental economics, urban planning and environmental studies. Currently, he is working on cities and climate change; carbon trading and the future of travel demand.

Prior to Stanford he was Principal with Nelson\Nygaard, a San Francisco based transportation planning consulting firm.

Pete Parker joins the MSE as a Faculty Lecturer and the Coordinator of the Montreal Urban Sustainability Experience (MUSE). He comes to McGill from the University of Florida.



Emphasizing environmental conservation, Dr. Parker's research addresses how communities can sustainably manage tourism as an alternative to unsustainably consuming natural resources. His past and present research includes protected areas management in terrestrial and marine settings through decentralized conservation, behaviour-change strategies, and sustainable livelihoods in Asia, the Caribbean, Africa, and North America.

The MSE is on facebook

Go to our homepage to link
www.mcgill.ca/mse



Welcome to the McGill School of Environment!



We lose sight of the importance of radio in our world of computers and TV.

The group of faculty and students working in Kibale National Park Uganda have just been awarded \$50,000 and another \$100,000 is on the way.

The project will develop radio shows to provide education about public health, reproductive health, and conservation in Western Uganda. This will involve over 300 shows to be aired on the radio.



Radio is the most effective means of reaching the local community, as most rural people do not have electricity or TVs. The effectiveness of this program will be evaluated over the next few years to determine if this is a model to try elsewhere. Also, the Kibale Health and Conservation centre has been asked by the local community to raise funds to make available a reliable supply of condoms at the Health Centre.

To learn more about the clinic:
<http://kibale-health-conservation.mcgill.ca/newsevents.html>

You can reach our team through:

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DO YOU HAVE AN OLD LAPTOP OR FILM CAMERA?

The Kibale Health and Conservation Project (KHCP) from Uganda is looking to help the local community and by doing so improve the relationship between the park and the local people, which will ultimately help protect endangered species and habitats.



One way to meet the goals of the KHCP is through the donation of things that people in Canada no longer want, but that people in Uganda are thrilled to receive. We all know how much we rely on computers, but just imagine a student at Makerere University in Uganda who comes from a rural village, and does not have the resources to buy a computer – any computer. Laptops, even if it is old, can make a huge difference to students from Makerere University.

Similarly, with the advent of digital cameras most of us have stopped using film cameras, but our old cameras are still sitting in that drawer. In Uganda, the rural community do not have computers, so digital cameras are of little use to them. Film cameras on the other hand are still much sought after items, because on special occasions, like weddings or the birth of a child, people invest in film to capture the moment.



If you have an old laptop computer or film camera and are willing to donate it to the Kibale Health and Conservation Centre, you can make an important contribution to the lives of the wonderful people in Uganda.

Please contact Colin Chapman - Anthropology at 514-398-1242 or colin.chapman@mcgill.ca and we will make sure your donation makes it to Uganda.



KUDOS

Together with Nick King (McGill Biomedical Ethics Unit) and Daniel Weinstock (Philosophy, University of Montreal), **Professor Iwao Hirose** (Philosophy & MSE) received a CIHR grant (over C\$1.7 million) for the project "Ethics, Social Determinants of Health, and Health Equity: Integrating Theory and Practice". In this project, they will examine the ethical foundations for reducing health inequality caused by climate change through redistributing the socially controllable determinants of health. To complete parts of this project, the Fondation Brocher in Geneva offered Hirose a visiting fellowship for May-June 2012. During the tenure of this fellowship, he hopes to finish two monographs: "Egalitarianism" (Routledge) and "Ethics and Health Care rationing" (Routledge).

Professor Brian Leung has completed a National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis (NCEAS) project, evaluating the cost of forest insect pests in collaboration with forest ecologists and economists, and determining which are the worst pathways of introduction and who bears the main cost (a 3 year project). Documentation from the project is being used in a recent policy letter to the US President stating that "failure to detect and intercept these non-native pests and diseases imposes serious economic and social costs on all Americans".

Dr. Joan Marshall retires from the MSE

It is with much admiration and fondness that we say good-bye to Joan.

She is part of the family and has been with the MSE since its inception. Her dedication to the School will be greatly missed.

Her research focus is on rural social change; gender & youth issues; sustainable aquaculture; fishery regulatory regimes; food markets & consumption in rural areas and integration of immigrant youth in urban areas.

We wish her the very best of life in her retirement years.



The MSE is:

Director—Marilyn Scott

Faculty Members

Madhav Badami (School of Urban Planning)

Christopher Barrington-Leigh (Inst. for Health & Social Policy)

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)

Nicolas Kosoy (Natural Resource Sciences)

Brian Leung (Biology)

Gregory Mikkelsen (Philosophy)

Adam Millard-Ball (Geography)

Jeanine Rhemtulla (Geography)

Anthony Ricciardi (Redpath Museum)

Raja Sengupta (Geography)

Renée Sieber (Geography)

Ismael Vaccaro (Anthropology)

Faculty Lecturers

George McCourt

Pete Parker

Kathryn Roulet

Staff

Danielle Lefebvre

Shannon Scott

Christina Zhu





The Boreal Forest: our land, our stories, our responsibility



“The greatest accomplishment of our people is that we left the land the way it was.”

Last night Chief Coon Come of the Grand Council of the Crees told the students gathered in a Stewart Bio lecture hall a story. Other cultures have left pyramids, monuments, and other great feats of architectural wonder. The Cree people have nothing of this sort to show for their thousands of years of living on their land. And yet, perhaps they have left us the most valuable wonder of all: the land, just the way it has always been.

Hosted by McGill's Aboriginal Sustainability Project and the Canadian Boreal Initiative, the event, titled “The Boreal Forest: our Land, Our Stories, Our Responsibility,” seemed more like a

celebration or community gathering than a lecture. For starters, the event was opened by Innu artist Kathia Rock from Maliotenam, a talented singer and guitar-player, whose songs had the whole audience up on their feet dancing, singing and clapping along with the music. I wonder when the last time a lecture in Stewart Bio was commenced with song and dance?

The theme of the event was respect for the land, and the three aboriginal leaders who told their stories to a captivated audience expressed this theme in diverse ways. Chief Coon Come discussed the importance of cooperation with First Nations people when pursuing the goal of protecting the land, and in particular the boreal forest. Coon Come described his people's depth of knowledge of their land, as many of them choose to “live off the land” as hunters, trappers and fisherman. As such, these people need to be partners with governments or businesses who wish to establish projects in Cree territory. The Cree can provide guidance on which areas need the most protection, and on how development projects can avoid harming the land. For instance, Coon Come told a story of a logging company that dumped its waste into a river. If the Cree had been consulted, they could have warned the company that the river was a salmon spawning ground, and the fish could have been protected.

Coon Come, as well as Chief Paul Gull of the Cree First Nation of Waswanipi, highlighted that, contrary to the popular stereotype, their people are not anti-development. Rather, they want to be included in development projects and have their traditional knowledge heard and taken into consideration. For Coon Come, this is a way that the protection of the land can be ensured; for Gull, the emphasis is on the livelihoods of his people. In Gull's community, 60% of the population is under thirty, and the majority of these youth are unemployed. Without job prospects in their communities, many young people are forced to leave the area, coming to cities like Montreal. However, development companies, such as those involved in forestry or mining, can provide local employment to his people, especially as traditional livelihoods continue to be threatened by declining animal populations, logging, and an increase in non-native fishing and cabins in the area. The challenge for Gull is finding the balance between taking advantage of the economic opportunities provided by development companies and continuing to support his people's traditional ways of life.

The final speaker was Stephen Kakfwi, former Premier of the Northwest Territories and former Dene Nation President. Kakfwi spoke of the need to change our current system if we are to protect the land for future generations. He recounted a story that was told to him by an elder and spiritual leader, in which a being from another planet comes to earth and, upon seeing the destruction humans have wrecked upon their beautiful planet, the being has no choice but to destroy the human race. For Kakfwi, the problem is that the system we are living in has no spirit, and doesn't recognize that the land, the water, the animals and all living things are sacred. But if we are united as First Nations, as Canadians, and as global citizens and learn to respect the sanctity of the land, we will be able to say proudly to that being from another planet that we have not destroyed, but rather protected and loved the beautiful land that is our earth.

--- **Kaitlyn Shannon, MSE Journalist**

