

in **Focus**

**McGill**

**Spring 2013**

**15<sup>th</sup>**

*anniversary*

McGill School of  
**Environment**



*Environmental Education  
for Choices that Sustain*



**Celebrate with us  
October 2013**



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## Director's Message

*Professor Marilyn Scott, Director of the McGill School of Environment*

For those of you who have followed my introductory comments throughout my time as Director of the MSE, you may notice a theme. Many have been written while travelling between campuses on our shuttle service. Today is no different!

Spring fever fills the air as students (and staff!) sense the end of the academic year around the corner. For the past two days, I have had the privilege of listening to our Honours students talk about their research – an extraordinary diversity of topics, all delivered with palpable energy and confidence! Congratulations to all 17 Honours students, and thanks to all our professors who guided their research.



I also attended our symposium on Canada's Environmental Future, organized by Prof Tony Ricciardi. The mix of outstanding speakers from McGill and across Canada and an attentive and inquiring audience of faculty and graduate students made the event truly memorable. Our goal is to publish the recommendations.

Professor Renee Sieber recently received the good news that her SSHRC Partnership Grant entitled "How the Geospatial Web 2.0 Is Reshaping Government Citizen Interactions" was funded for a total value of \$5.7 million. This is tremendous news for her and her team, and also for the environment story in Canada if their results truly reshape government-citizen interactions!

George McCourt, our Associate Director for Undergraduate Affairs, made the news twice in the past month. He received the Catalyst Award for Staff Contribution to Sustainability Efforts, and he will be the recipient of the Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences Award for Teaching Excellence.

We are delighted to welcome Dr. Kevin Manaugh to the position of Assistant Professor in Urban Sustainability. His joint appointment between the MSE and the Department of Geography will begin on August 1, 2013. Watch for his profile in our Fall Newsletter.



I am also very delighted to announce that **Professor Nancy Ross** will assume the role of Director of the MSE effective September 1, 2013. Prior to joining McGill in 2001, she was a Senior Research Scientist at Statistics Canada. Her research focuses on understanding and reducing the socio-environmental determinants of chronic disease. At McGill, Nancy has been the recipient of a multiple career awards from CIHR and the FRSQ. She is the past Scientific Editor-in-Chief of Health Reports and is a longstanding member of the Population and Public Health Review Committee of CIHR. Nancy is highly regarded for her respectful management style, her high personal standards and expectations of others. She is an outstanding choice as next Director of the MSE. We will be in great hands!



## The Right to be Cold: Sheila Watt-Cloutier on climate change, human rights, and Inuit culture

Interview conducted and edited by Emilio Comay del Junco, MSE Reporter

Sheila Watt-Cloutier, who presented this year's Environment Public Lecture at the MSE, is an internationally acclaimed environmental and indigenous rights activist. She was born in Nunavik and grew up in Nova Scotia and Manitoba, before returning to the Arctic, where she currently lives in Iqaluit. She served as Canadian president of the Inter Circumpolar Council, an international body representing Inuit communities in Canada, Russia, Alaska and Greenland, from 1995 to 2002 and as the organization's international chair from 2002 to 2006. During that time, she served as the representative for northern indigenous peoples in the negotiation of the Stockholm Convention, which banned the production and use of persistent organic pollutants. In 2005 she and 62 Inuit elders launched the first ever petition linking climate change and human rights with the Inter-American Council on Human Rights, against the United States' government. In 2007 she was named a Nobel Peace Prize nominee. I spoke with her before her lecture.



**MSE:** *Could you start off by talking a bit about the severity of climate change for Inuit and other northern communities?*

**SWC:** The changes are great and they have been happening now for a number of years and they've got worse in the last ten years. Cold and snow and ice are the foundations of our culture, they represent mobility and transportation and as soon as that starts to become precarious, it's an issue of safety and security. Those issues that are most stark are changes that affect daily lives. We are still hunting and fishing and gathering. We may have nine to five jobs, but in most areas, even those who work nine to five are still hunting on weekends and on holidays and there are many people who are just out hunting all the time if they can afford to.

Country food remains extremely important to us, but it's not just about the food itself, it's the process of the hunt as well. So the changes are great. This year may be different because it was very cold. But we have to embrace the cold now, when it comes, because it's not going to be every year and forever. The trends are just too big to ignore. The ice usually forms much later. Even this year, which was very cold, the ice didn't form until very late. Growing up it used to be September or October that the ice would form and now we're lucky to have it by Christmas. The effects of that are drastic – the waters become too cold for boats to go out, but then there's no ice for the snow machines to go on. So there's a longer transition period where the hunter is just waiting.

And even when the ice freezes over, it forms differently. It's not as thick and what you see on the surface is not what's underneath, and it's unpredictable. Hunters are now having more accidents, falling through when they normally would not have before. And there have been more search and rescue operations as a result of [ice breaking off and stranding hunters.]

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**MSE:** Something climate change educators talk about a lot is how difficult it is to make people care about climate change when its effects don't seem so tangible in southern Canada or the US. What is the difficulty of communicating climate change to people in, say, Montreal?

**SWC:** I think that's starting to change. In the beginning people used to say, "Oh that's their problem up there, it's never going to affect me." and "Why wouldn't they want it to be warmer and why don't they just assimilate?" I've heard it all. But it's only going to be a matter of time, because the arctic is the early warning for the rest of the planet and whatever happens in the

arctic is going to happen elsewhere.

**MSE:** Climate change and human rights seemed to be two unconnected things until recently, and now it's very mainstream to link them. What prompted you to make that connection?

**SWC:** When I was working on the persistent organic pollutants (POPs) issue, it was already a very daunting task to get people to understand that it was not just a chemical problem, that it was a human story. People were absolutely negatively affected and that their health was impacted. That Inuit women had to think twice about breastfeeding because of toxins in their breast milk was a stark reality that the world needed to wake up to, and it did, once we were able to put a human face on it. So we were quite successful with that particular work that we spent a lot of time and energy on.

That treaty, the Stockholm Convention, became the fastest treaty to be signed, ratified, and implemented in the history of the UN. And it's a great success story, where governments and aboriginal peoples worked together to do the right thing.

My grandson was at risk of losing this amazing, resilient culture that I had been born in. I traveled only by dog team for the first ten years of my life, I didn't know English until I was six. That's the foundation I come from and I know that it isn't just about the hunting, but the principles and values of the culture and how important it is for our young people to be balanced in both areas.

There's no doubt that it's a human rights issue. When countries of the world know the cause of what's happening to the arctic and still say we'll find other means to survive and we'll find other jobs by opening up mining and resource extraction. And even though our leaders are still heading that way, in reality many people are starting to question whether we're putting all our eggs into one basket and investing in the one thing that's really hurting us, which is greenhouse gas emissions.



**MSE:** Could you talk more specifically about the Human Rights complaint that you filed with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. It didn't result in a declaration against the United States, do you still view it as a productive course of action?

**SWC:** It was a remarkable experience, because we launched this petition and it took a year for them to respond to us, and when they did it was a very short, curt letter saying that they didn't see any real legal connections [between climate and human rights] and that they couldn't proceed. But I'm very persistent and made calls and wrote letters and we did what we could to at least get a hearing on the legal impacts, which they finally agreed to do and we had historic testimony linking climate change and human rights. So we went to testify and never heard back from them.

I wonder what really happened there. At the time, just before we received the official letter from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights saying they didn't think they had enough to go ahead with the petition, we had heard about it from someone in the State Department that it wasn't going to happen. Why would the State Department know about it before we did? There was some politics at play there I suspect.



# 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary

McGill School of Environment  
**Environment**



*Environmental Education  
for Choices that Sustain*



**Celebrate with us  
October 2013**

**As we approach our 15th anniversary we took this opportunity to look back to our beginning. We asked some of the MSE founders to reminisce.**

**Nigel Roulet, James McGill Professor of Geography and in the MSE, former MSE Director and Co-Founder**

*What was studying the environment like at McGill in 1998, when the School began, and why was the MSE a necessary addition?*

Before the MSE there were no integrated programs. Students took environmental science courses but these had very strong and specific disciplinary perspectives. Nothing wrong with that but the students wanted something more integrated. After hearing about these issues for a number of years several enlightened Deans asked if we could design a program that had an integrated core and used the expertise in specific disciplines and departments to build in depth. It was this integration and attempt to seek a greater level of interdisciplinarity that were the “necessary additions”.



*What were the main challenges involved in establishing the School?*

There were many challenges to establishing the MSE. First the faculty at McGill had to be convinced that the School was a good idea – that it would give true added value rather than simply reorganizing the deck chairs. To determine the interest and what faculty thought should be the central organizing principles of the MSE we did a number of consultations. However, there was one meeting where we brought in professional facilitators that had over 100 faculty members attend.

*What were or are the advantages and disadvantages of having an interdisciplinary set up without the structure of a traditional department?*

It is next to impossible to accomplish the interdisciplinarity that the MSE offers within a single program or faculty. This breadth of knowledge is difficult to bring together in a university that takes a reductionist approach to teaching and discovery – and was, and continues to be, exceptionally good at it. The MSE offered an alternative to the reductionist – disciplinary specific – model. The world is not really that black and white and neither is McGill University. Individual departments and programs have become more interdisciplinary than they used to be. Many innovations in degree programs exist now – the MSE pioneered some to these but there were a lot of other nodes of the emergence of these ideas.



## John Galaty, Professor of Anthropology and MSE Associate Member and Co-Founder

by Emilio Comay del Junco, MSE Reporter

*What was studying the environment like at McGill before 1998, when the School began, and why was the MSE a necessary addition?*



The notion [creating an interdisciplinary program] arose from the diversity of scholars at McGill concerned with the environment – especially in Arts, Science, and Agriculture (and Environmental Science), but also Medicine, Engineering and elsewhere! At that time, there

was no occasion or mechanism at McGill for researchers to share ideas or even to become aware of one another. So when large meetings of interested parties were convened as the process of creating the MSE began, it was exciting to hear about the work being pursued in different corners of the university. You ask what it was like to study the environment in those early days: it might be suggested that everyone studied in their own departments, adopting various disciplinary perspectives on the environment, but not studying “the environment” per se. In this regard, the MSE seemed a necessary addition in order to lend order and mutual recognition to the pursuits of things environmental, since this was not done anywhere else.

*What were the main challenges involved in establishing the School?*

The major challenges in creating the MSE involved overcoming tensions between the sciences and the humanities and social sciences, which was partially overcome by insisting that both aspects should be present in key courses and approaches, which remains a founding principle of the MSE. There was divergence between those who wanted to make the School self-standing, with its own positions, and those who insisted that all positions should be 'joint', so the departments and faculties that were participating would remain engaged and not feel that the MSE was competing with the line departments over positions, students, or funding. The latter perspective won out, given the feeling by the Deans that they didn't want the MSE to compete with the faculties.

## Colin Scott, Professor of Anthropology, MSE Co-Founder

*What was studying the environment like at McGill in 1998, when the School began, and why was the MSE a necessary addition?*

Before the MSE was established, an enterprising student could find a wide array of courses on a diversity of environmental topics, across several faculties at McGill. In a few existing departments, a student could become immersed in the approach of a specific discipline to environmental issues. But there was no programming dedicated to equipping students with a comprehensive and strategic perspective on environment.



Colleagues from several faculties at McGill saw value in training undergraduates, and eventually graduate students, for such a perspective. Environment is inherently a holistic object of study, and we believed there was great value in developing students' capacity (and our capacity as professors and researchers) to speak with one another across the epistemological differences of humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. This would not only lead to research discovery, but also improve our capacity as researchers for effective agency in broader societal arenas of citizen communication and public policy.

*What were and are the advantages and disadvantages of having an interdisciplinary set up without the structure of a traditional department?*

The main advantages, I believe, include the stimulus for new questions and ideas that occur when students/professors/researchers engage one another from diverse disciplinary perspectives, and the potential for more comprehensive answers to inherently complex environmental problems – in which physical, chemical, biological, social and cultural aspects are inextricably intertwined. Not having the “structure of a traditional department,” at the same time, has entailed a certain vulnerability, organizationally. The competing interests of other units in the university haven't always added up to what, in conception, might represent the best organizational design for teaching, learning and research about environment – arguably the most complex and urgent object of study for the university to come to grips with.



**Chandra Madramootoo, James McGill professor of Bioresource Engineering, Dean of the Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Associate Vice-Principal**

*What are the biggest changes that the MSE has undergone in its first 15 years?*

The growth in the student body, and the excellent highly committed professors who have been attracted by the mission and vision of the MSE. Also the type of real life, hands-on projects being tackled by the students is phenomenal. The students are graduating with skills that are positioning them in excellent careers or for further graduate studies.

*What addition would you most like to see added to the School's activities?*

I would like to see the School implement a major international conference every two years or so, bringing in the leading environmental thinkers and scholars, to debate the environmental issues at hand. This would be an amazing educational experience for our students, and the staff as well.

*Where do you see the School at age 30?*

I would like to see the School ranked as the number one place for students from around the world to come to do a residential collegial style educational program in environment, and that it be a magnet to attract the top scholars who wish to do teaching and research and public outreach in the environment.



15<sup>th</sup> anniversary

Environment  
for Change



McGill School of  
**Environment**

Join us for Homecoming Weekend October 17-19, 2013

Help us celebrate 15 years of excellence in environmental research and teaching in the McGill School of Environment.





# *Environmental Education for Choices that Sustain*



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**McGill Alumni On-Line Community:**

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**Pete Barry, former MSE Program Coordinator and Advisor MSE. Currently Chief Academic Adviser in the Faculty of Science**

*What are the advantages and disadvantages of having an interdisciplinary set up?*



I like that the MSE programs cross disciplinary lines and get students and faculty thinking about the environment and our relationship to it in a holistic way. The interdisciplinary nature of the school brings people together who might not normally interact. There is the potential for synergy and increased creativity. MSE students also get to see how people in different fields think and approach problems, and what their

assumptions are. This is a useful skill if you want to persuade people to change.

On the downside, having a program that is composed of courses from several departments who don't normally communicate with each other can make for a lot of operational problems, like course schedule conflicts and unexpected course cancellations. The MSE only controls the core courses, everything else is by negotiation.

*What most notable or memorable about the School's students?*

I had a student who insisted that she wanted to walk and work on glaciers, so she went on exchange to the University of Alaska Fairbanks and worked with glaciologists in the ice fields. When she came back she said it had been a great experience, and now she wanted to work in green architecture! So she joined one of the projects the MSE had on the subject. She was not unfocused, she just had a lot of interests and was not afraid to explore. I was happy that the MSE was able to help her do that.

*What are the biggest changes that the MSE has undergone in its first 15 years?*

I think the biggest change, from the point of view of a former (1998-2008) advisor and recruiter for the School, came once our students graduated and started getting into graduate schools and getting jobs. All through the planning stages for the Environment program, that was the one thing we kept telling ourselves had to work. Anyone graduating from our program had to be admissible to graduate studies at McGill (at least). We were careful to design the courses and programs accordingly, and were pretty confident in our success, but until students actually started in graduate programs, we could never be sure. So once we saw them getting into graduate schools, I breathed a sigh of relief.

One thing that was really cool was when former graduates who had jobs or had started businesses began returning as clients for the ENVR 401 Environmental Research course. They were like path-breakers coming back to tell the newer students that yes, there really is a world out there that you can work in.

*Where do you see the School at age 30?*

I think the Environment program has the potential for longevity that will take it to 2028 and beyond, as long as people remain engaged and work to keep the program relevant to a changing world. What made sense in 1998 may not work in 2028, but it is only by regularly reviewing the programs and direction of the School that the MSE will stay relevant.

One of my early memories from the MSE is Joe Rasmussen recounting his estimates of MSE enrolment. Sometime in early 1998 –  
University Administrator in charge of scheduling courses: “So, how many students are you expecting in your new ENVR courses this fall?”  
MSE: “Uhh, somewhere between two and three hundred.”  
Admin: “Really? That is a lot for a new course.”  
MSE: “No, I mean somewhere between 2, and 300.”  
Admin: “Gonna be a long year...”



**Deborah Buszard, Former Dean of the Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and Professor of Plant Sciences. Currently Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Principal, University of British Columbia Okanagan; MSE Co-Founder**

*What are the advantages and disadvantages of having an interdisciplinary set up without the structure of a traditional department?*

To me the advantages are the opportunity for professors and students to make interdisciplinary connections and address real world, complex and interdisciplinary issues from truly interdisciplinary perspectives, in classes and research. Having the MSE professors cross appointed to other disciplinary units also provides them with an excellent community for their disciplinary scholarship. The disadvantage of not being a traditional department is that everyone has two home units – so they are super busy and committed to two communities of scholars.



*Where do you see the School at age 30?*

Thriving and continuing to evolve. It has astounding professors, students and alumni. By the time it is 30 we will start to see the significant impacts its graduates are having in the world. I am sure they will be significant and I look forward to celebrating that big anniversary!

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## Research in Action: Notes from the MSE 2013 Research Symposium

by Emilio Comay del Junco, MSE Reporter

The MSE's latest research symposium saw eight researchers from across the country gather to discuss a huge range of challenges posed by climate change and related shifts in the global ecosystem. The talks ranged from changes in biodiversity of Canadian lakes, to food security, to the phenomenon of global warming more generally. But, despite the wide range of topics, the day-long conference, held on April 15, produced extensive dialogue between experts with very different backgrounds.



Starting off the day was York University biologist **Norman Yan**, who described massive changes occurring to a cluster of lakes north of the Greater Toronto Area. Yan explained that a combination of climate change, calcium depletion and other stressors has contributed to the rapid loss of multiple species, including crayfish and several zooplankton. Though his talk detailed major changes, Yan remained optimistic about the possibility of reversing the harmful ones. As he explained, changes “only become irreversible when species become extinct ... mother nature is pretty amazing.”



Moving from fresh water to saltwater, Dalhousie University marine biologist **Boris Worm** spoke about changes to ocean biodiversity, prompted by a range of human impacts on the biosphere, including overfishing, climate change, and pollution. One of the most striking elements of Worm's talk was his discussion of micro plastics, particles of plastic the size of fine grains of sand that are increasingly showing up in marine organisms. As he explained, these need “to be dealt with the same way as other persistent pollutants: make sure that they are not released into the environment, but recycled.”



MSE professor **Anthony Ricciardi** picked up on concerns raised by both previous speakers in his presentation on invasive species. While Ricciardi made a point of not passing judgment on these changes – “I'm not saying they're good or bad” – he did raise concerns about species from far away upsetting pre-existing balances. As he explained, “the more distinctive a species is, the more likely it is to be disruptive.”



Climate change was on everyone's minds in some form, but it was Concordia geography professor **Damon Matthews** who addressed it most directly. In his talk on the effects of climate change in Canada, Matthews emphasized that the effects of warming on much of the northern part of the country might be particularly intense. Matthews explained that a 2-degree increase globally would be more like a 5-degree increase for much of Canada.



McGill geography professor **Navin Ramankutty** was also concerned about climate change in his presentation on the future of Canadian agriculture. The impact of warmer temperatures on Canadian crop production will be decidedly mixed, with many of Canada's key crops, like canola wheat, benefitting. Ramankutty acknowledged that certain apparent benefits of climate change could make it harder to effect concrete action on global warming, noting additionally that “climate change is a huge equity challenge as well – the people most responsible for the problem may be the least affected, and conversely those least responsible [to be] most affected.”

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## Research in Action: Notes from the MSE 2013 Research Symposium



Broadening the focus, MSE professor **Elena Bennett** gave a more theoretical presentation focusing on the notion of regime shifts, which she defined as “large, persistent, and often sudden shifts in the structure and function of a system.” She also talked about the notion of the anthropocene, a conceptual scheme under which human activity permanently alters Earth’s ecosystems. Although her presentation was less explicitly optimistic about the reversibility of certain changes, Bennett emphasized afterward that she was “optimistic about the future of the environment. Either we’re going to make changes and make it better. Or the Earth will continue on without human species.”



The day’s final speaker, Dalhousie biology professor **Bill Freedman**, turned back to more local issues as well as some solutions. His talk on Canada’s ecological sustainability highlighted the importance of soft management techniques, such as low-intensity livestock grazing on native prairie and moving away from clear-cutting in forestry. He also emphasized the importance of changing our own habits; when I asked about renewable energy sources after his talk, he explained that while renewable resources are the “key to sustainability,” even more important is “not to build up energy supplies but to reduce the demand for energy.”



**Jean-Sébastien Landry**, a graduate student in geography at McGill, talked about changes to the boreal forest in northwestern North America. He outlined how warmer temperatures have increased both drought and fire, leaving species like the black spruce at risk. But, like most of the presenters, he was also optimistic about the future. As he explained, “the forest will basically always come back.”

## Catalyst Awards Celebrate Sustainability Stars

Reprinted with permission from the “McGill Reporter”

by *Julia Solomon, Journalist*

Sustainability work can be a risky business. At least so said Martin Kraymer von Krauss, Manager of McGill’s Office of Sustainability, at the 3rd annual Catalyst Awards Gala to celebrate sustainability achievements on Wednesday, April 3. Referring to efforts ranging from McGill’s early sustainability commitments such as signing the Talloires Declaration, to the passage of the McGill’s Sustainability Policy in 2010, to embarking on the Vision 2020 sustainability planning process, Kraymer von Krauss said, “C’est sur qu’il y a tout le temps de gros risques associés à ce genre d’entreprise: Les gens viendront-ils? Seront-nous en mesure de converger?”

The answer on Wednesday night was a resounding yes. People came, they celebrated, they toasted the award winners and each other for the progress that McGill has made on sustainability over the past several years (<http://publications.mcgill.ca/reporter/2013/04/catalyst-awards-celebrates/>). In their own individual ways, each of this year’s Catalyst Award winners demonstrates the courage that Kraymer von Krauss was referring to — the willingness to take risks, to experiment, to ask challenging questions and tinker with the status quo in pursuit of their answers. The results of their dedication speak for themselves.



Catalyst Award winners (from left to right): Selina Liu, Marina Privorotsky, Susanna Klassen, Diana King, George McCourt, Jerome Conraud and Marc- Étienne Brunet. Award winners William Agnew and Samra Lakew are not in the picture. / Photo: Owen Egan.



## Haida Gwaii Semester in Natural Resource Studies

Linnaea Fyles, BSc., May 2011, Major Environment - Land Surface Processes & Environmental Change

My name is Linnaea Fyles and I graduated from the McGill School of Environment two years ago. I was inspired by the field trips, field school and field work during my time in the MSE, to embark on a new adventure, and learn about subjects I was familiar with, but in a new environment. Through an MSE ad, I found out about the Haida Gwaii Semester in Natural Resource Studies (through UBC) and travelled to BC's northwest coast to embark on what turned out to be a term of wonderful adventures. While Haida Gwaii is known around the world for its art and majestic forests, it is also known for ground-breaking advances in resource co-management between government and First Nations. Haida Gwaii is a seven-hour ferry ride from the mainland and a far cry from anywhere I have lived before, most of all downtown Montreal. Although getting to my place of study was a journey in itself, the classes I took there and the people I met came to be the greatest journey of all. I was exposed to the islands in a way few people are, exploring the history of resource management, economic development, First Nations in the context of natural resources and rainforest ecology.



Today, I'm still in Haida Gwaii. I 'caught the bug' as they say, and have fallen in love with the islands and the people. I now work for the Haida Gwaii Higher Education Society and I have come to think of my courses at McGill often. The MSE provided me with the opportunity to pursue and explore many of my interests while enabling me to discover new ones. MSE courses provided me with a foundation in both arts and science which gave me the perfect background for my courses and my job in Haida Gwaii. More years of study may well lie in my future. For the moment, however, I relish the opportunity I have been given to explore more of these beautiful islands.

## Experiential Learning

Tanya Taggart-Hodge, BA&Sc, U3, Interfaculty Program Environment; Minor Concentration Anthropology

Margarethe Mead once said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." This quote has inspired me since a young age, and in many ways, sums up the mentality that I had coming into the MSE. Knowledge acquisition is undeniably key to the McGill School of Environment, yet it is the opportunity for experiential learning that has been most meaningful to me. As Tyler Knott Gregson said, "Promise me you will not spend so much time treading water and trying to keep your head above the waves that you forget, truly forget, how much you have always loved to swim". The sharing, collaboration, interdisciplinary approach and continuous courage to undertake complex problems -- that is where the MSE's future resides. A degree in Environmental Studies is about having fun, exploring deep questions, addressing key issues, developing expertise, building bridges and remembering how much we love to swim.



Tanya Taggart-Hodge and friends in Antarctica



**James Stram**

B.Sc. (Agriculture and Environmental Sciences)  
Major Environment - Renewable Resource Mgmt

Hello, I graduated in May of 2010. After I graduated I rode my bicycle to New Orleans, where I'm currently the wetlands coordinator at a local non-profit. Now I'm getting ready to launch (literally) a project I've been planning for many months. I'm going to sail around one of the largest wetlands areas in the world, Lake Pontchartrain, on a boat I built, to preserve the coast.

You can also check out my current project on facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/CircumPontchartrain>.

This spring five adventurers will be taking wetlands restoration to the next level. Over the course of a month, they will circumnavigate the shores of Lake Pontchartrain on a large pontoon raft made using salvaged and recycled building materials in order to document, and help to restore, areas of severe land loss. The five will be getting dirty and planting thousands of plugs of native marsh grasses and cypress trees grown at the Common Ground Relief Wetlands Restoration Station all along the way. The filming of the condition of the lake, the restoration efforts, as well as life on the raft; will, with media coverage and Common Ground Relief's local and national network of support, inspire and educate thousands of people about the severe environmental issues that face Louisiana and the nation. Common Ground Relief and the crew will contact research universities to offer assistance in data collection for research relating to wetlands loss and degradation. By traveling slowly on a simple raft, getting wet and muddy, eating seafood from the lake, and raising both awareness and the health of the wetlands, this project will be an adventure with a purpose.

This December we will be doing a mini-trip, to "test the waters" so to speak. It'll be cold, we'll have fewer crew members, and we won't have sponsors. But once this boat is finished there's no way you can keep me off it. I'm putting it in the water right away!

James Stram  
Common Ground Relief  
Wetlands Coordinator

**The MSE is:**

**Director—Marilyn Scott**

**Faculty Members**

**Madhav Badami (School of Urban Planning)**

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

**Elena Bennett (Natural Resource Sciences)**

**Peter G. Brown (Geography)**

**Jeffrey Cardille (Natural Resource Sciences)**

**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 Mikkelson (Philosophy)**

**Jeanine Rhemtulla (Geography)**

**Anthony Ricciardi (Redpath Museum)**

**Raja Sengupta (Geography)**

**Renée Sieber (Geography)**

**Ismael Vaccaro (Anthropology)**

**Faculty Lecturers**

**Julia Freeman  
George McCourt  
Kathy Roulet**

**Staff**

**Danielle Lefebvre  
Shannon Scott  
Christina Zhu**





Photo: Tanya Taggart-Hodge, BA&Sc, U3, Interfaculty Program Environment; Minor Anthropology

