





The Otesha Project 2005



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### **GRATITUDE AND APPRECIATION**

LIKE ALL OF OTESHA'S programs, projects and dreams, this book is the result of contributions from an incredible number of people.

Before the book even began, several people and organizations gave their time, vision and guidance. They include long-time mentors, like Michael Bloomfield from the Harmony Foundation and Mike Kaulbars from the Peace and Environmental Resource Center, as well our friends at the Center for a New American Dream, Green Teacher, and YOUCAN.

Then the authors (18 in total!), all Otesha members, contributed their time, energy, creativity, humour, and beautiful personalities to creating what you have in your hands. They are Omar Bhimji, Jasmine Foxlee, Ed Gillis, Levi Goertz, Dan Gravenor, Andrea Horan, Anita Imrie, Mel Jellett, Jessica Lax, Brook Land-Murphy, Jocelyn Land-Murphy, Jocelyn Parr, Katherine Ryan, Kristin Ryan, Rea Thomson, Lori Waller, Sho Waxman and Alex Way.

In addition to the editing done by the authors above, Keli Bellaire, Laura McGrath, Simon Moll, Steve Parr, Andrea Rideout, and Leo and Louanne Lax provided additional ideas, sense, grammatical integrity, factual accuracy, humour, style, and funk. Our international perspective was enhanced by Nick and friends from Australia's Cycling for Sustainability, who offered tremendous insight and energy, and by Bruce Crowther from Garstang, England. Finally, the newest Otesha members from our nine Hopeful High School Hooligan teams pitched in with affirmation, a keen eye for grammar, and thoughtful, constructive input. Special editors from their teams include: Sarah Khaizaran, Tze-Sun Ooi, Caryma Sa'd, Julia Kolesnik, Kess Emond-Sioufi, Jane Kouptsova and Emily Clarey.

We are also very thankful for the mind-blowing talent and generous heaps of time and commitment contributed by our brilliant designers Kevin Lo and John Stuart, and inimitable illustrator Colin White. These three men diligently applied their magic and brought this book to life with hilarity and style beyond all of our dreams.

This book would also not be possible without the generous support this year from Environment Canada, Green Street (J.W. McConnell Family Foundation), The Laidlaw Foundation, The Walter Duncan and Gordon Foundation, Mountain Equipment Co-op Environment Fund, The Lifebridge Foundation and individual donors all across Canada.

Last, but certainly not least, we want to thank all of the incredible people and organizations that have inspired us with their passion, determination, and most importantly, their action!

Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you!

With our fullest, warmest gratitude and appreciation, The Otesha Team



### <u>How I wa( made</u>

Created in true Otesha style, this book 'walks the talk' in the very fibers and ink of its pages! The Otesha Book is printed by Warren's Waterless in Toronto, a revolutionary company with incredible dedication to environmental printing. As you may have gathered, they print with an innovative, waterless process—oh yeah, no rivers or lakes were drained for the printing of this book! And we're not done yet—they used vegetable-based inks in unique recyclable packaging (no cartridges in landfills), produced fewer volatile organic compounds (VOCs, as hazardous as they sound), and managed disposal of expired chemicals with no contaminated drain waste!

And the paper—oh yeah! Cascades' Rolland Enviro is 100% post-consumer waste, processed chlorine-free, and check this out: the paper mill is powered with bio-gas from a nearby landfill (that's right, fossil-fuel-free, friends)!

These awesome methods give us much hope for a sustainable future—yahoo!

## This is not a typical book.

It has no glossy cover, but rather one that was made with 'garbage' – materials once destined for the landfill.

It wasn't written by a famous author, or even a single author, but rather by 18 members of The Otesha Project who shared their words in these pages.

This book did not contribute to the cutting down of forests or to the release of toxic chemicals from paper-bleaching – instead it is printed in one of the most environmentally sound ways we could find.

This isn't a textbook. It doesn't just present facts or information, and we aren't trying to 'teach' you anything. It is not a book of 'inspiring stories for the easily inspired', nor is it a list of 1001 things you should be doing to change the world. Instead, we are offering our points of view and our life experiences. We are opening up a space for all of us to exchange ideas, trusting that in the end everyone will find their own answers.

You won't find this book at 'most book stores' or on the bestseller list. Instead, you either made it yourself, or received it from someone who cares about its contents. From person to person, this book carries a message that is on its own journey, and that's how it has ended up right here, in your hands, right now.

Like we said, it's not a typical book

### Introduction

HE JOURNEY OF THE WORDS on these pages started in February 2002, when two young Canadian women, Jess and Joss, met while studying in Kenva, a country in eastern Africa. Leaving their comfortable bubble in Canada, they witnessed poverty and inequality in a way that made them feel hopeless and frustrated. They began to question whether their everyday actions and choices, in Kenya and back home, played a role in it all. It was a painful realization that the way they used natural resources like water and energy, and the consumer choices they made with food and clothing, could actually contribute to the problems they saw. However, they soon learned that any problem to which they contributed also presented them with an amazing opportunity to be part of its solution, by making better everyday choices. They found hope and empowerment in trying to be, as Gandhi said, the change they wanted to see in the world. With a changed outlook and some pep in their step, they saw themselves and the problems they witnessed differently, and Jess and Joss were never the same again. As their positive actions took root, their desire to encourage others to consciously make choices for change also began to sprout.

#### Enter Otesha

'Otesha' is a word in Ki-Swahili (a language of eastern Africa) that means, "to cause to dream." Their experiences in Kenya caused Jess and Joss to dream of a project that would involve 33 young people cycling across Canada, delivering presentations about how our individual choices impact the world. To show respect for the experience in which this dream was so deeply rooted, they decided to name their project 'Otesha'.

In the summer of 2003, this team of cyclists (many of whom are authors of this book!) brought the message you'll find here to hundreds of schools, community centers, summer camps, and living rooms, mainly through a hilarious theatre performance. This skit showed a morning of choices that an average Canadian high school student might make between 8 and 9 am, with six distinct scenes for: getting washed up in the bathroom, getting dressed, watching television, grabbing a coffee, packing a lunch, and getting to school. Each chapter in this book matches one of the scenes in the skit. In 2003-2004 alone, over 20,000 people have seen Otesha presentations, and that number is constantly growing. In fact, you might have seen one yourself! If you have, then you know that the message we share is not one of taking a single action, or of gaining more knowledge about a single issue. Oh, no, friends. The goal of all Otesha activities, and of this book, is to inspire a revolution in the way we see the world and our role in it. And we're not just talking about lighting the spark of a revolution here; we're talking about one all-out, full-fledged, love-filled, sustainabilitydriven, party-happenin', lifelong bonfire of a revolution! You see, we 'Oteshaites' believe that no world-changing action is complete without a heavy dose of an ingredient called *fun!* 

#### Enter the Otesha Book

Collectively brainstormed, written and edited, this book echoes the voices of many who are already a part of this journey. Its purpose is to make sure that questions get answers (and generate more questions, too), that sparks turn into bonfires, and that hope turns into action! It presents the knowledge and facts that helped to remove our blinders and make us aware of some of the problems in the world. It shares our personal realizations, from when we first held up the mirror and recognized that our actions are often a part of those problems. It brings together some of the stories that empower us and inspire us to believe that anything is possible. And finally, it shares many ideas for taking the easy, fun, beautiful actions that can make our world a better place. These four themes: blinders, mirror, empowerment and action, will be presented in each of the six chapters. A different 'Oteshaite' narrates each of the chapters and navigates you through the collection of comics, poems, journal entries, and facts with their own experiences.

What you hold in your hands is the best tool we could create; however, we will not pretend that our views do not go without controversy or debate. Like you, we're constantly seeking to learn more about the world and our role in it. In the end, we trust that you will decide for yourself the impact that *you* want to have on the world.

#### Enter you—the reader.

You play a very important role in this journey:

This book carries many emotions: happiness, sadness, powerlessness, elation, anger, hope, confusion and passion, to name a few. In it we write from the heart, so as you participate in the continued journey of these words, we ask the same from you as a reader. We ask that you be open to laughter, to struggling, and to questioning everyday actions and the world around you. We ask you to sit back with an open mind and get to know us as people who believe that a better future starts with changing ourselves.

If you have a homemade book, we also invite you to become an honorary author by adding pages to the book (easily done by opening the binder rings, folding a used piece of 8.5 x 11 paper, punching two holes, inserting the paper, and closing the rings). With these pages, you can add your own ideas, thoughts, and research into the issues discussed. Feel free to add a page anywhere you choose.

There is also a page at the back of the book for you to include local info such as fun bike paths, stores that carry organic, fair trade products, and lots of other great stuff! We also invite you to share this book with other people and track it through bookcrossing, sending it further along in its journey.

Finally, we ask that when you turn the last page of this book, the next choice you make reflects the change you want to see. Person by person, action by action, is how this message travels and the revolution grows.

This book has the power to change your life and the world... if you let it.

May the journey continue...



# **Removing** the Blinders



Hi! My name is Levi Goertz, your esteemed and dedicated narrator for this chapter. I'm from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and I *love* water! Isn't water great? We drink it, bathe in it, swim in it, cook with it, spray it at each other, sprinkle it on our gardens, wash our hands, dishes and our clothes with it, and use it to flush our 'bathroom waste' away to... somewhere else! Growing up in Canada, water was something I took for granted. I mean, there's plenty of water here—all I have to do is turn on the tap and

badda-bing, badda-boom: out flows clean water, fresh and abundant! It rains pretty frequently, and many of us live near lakes, rivers, or at least a neighbourhood swimming pool. In fact, our bodies are over half water! There's water all over the place: think of the Great Lakes, and the oceans... this 'blue planet' is covered in water!

Seems pretty straightforward. Until you sneak a peek at a story that ain't got no leaks—the little known hidden gem known in Otesha-land as the one, the only...

# Tale Behind the Tap!



Whoa! I had no idea that clean freshwater is such a tiny percentage of the world's water! We better be respecting, conserving, and protecting that one precious drop of water every way we can! Maybe a handy Fact Box could tell me how we're doing!

## WATER FACT BOX

That one little droplet of water is currently being **wasted**:

- To survive, a human being needs 2.4 litres of water per day.<sup>1</sup>
- The average Canadian uses 343 litres of water every single day!<sup>2</sup> (The average in Sweden: 200 litres; in France: 150 litres)<sup>3</sup>

It is also **polluted** with toxins and wastes from our homes, our factories, and our farms. Among the goodies finding their way into our water supply in Canada are pesticides, sewage run-off, oil, gas and septic tank leaks, landfill seepage, road salt, hormones and antibiotics from prescription medicine, and chemicals used in manufacturing everything from cars to computers!

Finally, that lonely little droplet of water is **commodified**.\* Over 2 billion people have no access to clean drinking water,<sup>4</sup> leaving one child to die **every 8 seconds** from drinking dirty water.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, the bottled water you see in the pop machine represents a **\$22 billion** industry<sup>6</sup> that defines clean water as something to be bottled and sold to the lucky few with enough money to pay... **\$22 billion** could build wells and purification systems in places where people are dying every day because they don't have clean water!

\* commodification: the commodification of water refers to the buying and selling of water, turning it into a product with a dollar value rather than a basic human right to which everyone has access. Massive transnational corporations have taken over the control of water management in rich and poor countries alike—often jacking up prices and limiting access to clean water for the poor.



**Did I read that right?** I guess we're not very good at respecting that single droplet of water after all. In the time it took to read that handy fact box, three children died because they don't have access to clean water. And two billion people... that's more than everyone in my town, everyone in my province, and everyone in Canada; in fact that's more than everyone in North America, Central America, South America, and Europe combined! Two billion people who can't turn on the tap and get a free flow of pure liquid goodness like I can. We're not just talking temporary bans on watering your lawn here—we're talking life and death.

Since water is fundamental to our very ability to survive, people are bound to get upset when they don't have any and others have so much. No wonder so many people predict that as this one little droplet of clean water becomes smaller and more sought after, humankind will witness even more inequity, exploitation and conflict—that "the wars of the next century will be about water."<sup>7</sup>

You can see water injustice across the globe...

**Canada:** Large Canadian hog farms produce as much pig poop per farm as the total amount of human waste produced by the Niagara Peninsula (360,000 people). The difference is that Niagara has sewage treatment plants, while the untreated hog manure sits in big vats and frequently seeps into our waterways!

United States: The computer industry in the U.S. alone uses over 4 billion litres of freshwater (enough for 1.7 billion people to drink) and produces 820 million litres of waste water *every day*.

> Mexico/U.S. border: 3,000 'maquiladoras' (foreignowned factories) along the 3,400 km border (see *clothing chapter*) create toxic wastelands, with waterways so polluted that 88% of residents have no reliable access to clean water. Water is delivered by truck once a week to those who can afford it. Those who can't have to use polluted water for cooking, bathing and irrigating crops, exposing themselves to dangerous diseases and bacteria.

## Water Injustice Around the World

All information from Barlow & Clarke, Blue Gold.

#### **REMOVING THE BLINDERS**

India: Newly constructed dams have messed up entire ecosystems beyond repair, and forced 60-80 million people out of their now-flooded homes in the last 60 years. 40% of those people are 'low-caste' indigenous people—even though these low-caste groups represent just 6% of the total Indian population!

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Jakarta, Indonesia: In the 1994 drought, residents' wells went dry. Yet golf courses (for wealthy tourists) received 1 million litres per day—enough to quench over 400,000 people's daily thirst—per golf course.

Africa: Of the 25 countries with the least access to clean water, 19 are in Africa.

Zambia: The high prices charged for clean water force low-income families to spend half their household income on water.

South Africa: Every day, South African women collectively walk sixteen times the distance of a round trip to the moon, just to get water for their families! 600,000 wealthy farmers (mostly white) consume 60% of the country's water, while 15 million poor people (mostly black) have no direct access to water.

## Water Myths

That's one pretty polluted, thirsty world! But is there really anything we can do about it as Canadians? It's time to dig deeper and de-mystify the water situation!

#### Myth 1: All sewage in Canada is treated and disposed of properly.

In Canada, one trillion litres of untreated sewage are dumped into waterways every year. This volume would cover the entire 7,800 km length of the Trans-Canada highway to a depth of 20 meters!<sup>8</sup> For coastal cities like Halifax and Victoria, that means sewage dumped directly into the ocean! Try swimming or canoeing around in that! Where does the sewage in your town go?

# Myth 2: We do not have the financial resources to supply clean water to the world.

Canadians manage to scrounge up \$17.2 billion for alcohol and tobacco, and \$28.6 billion for clothes, every year.<sup>9</sup> It would cost only US\$14 billion to provide clean water and sanitation for everyone in the world.<sup>10</sup> That means that if Canadians gave up one-third of their booze and clothes budgets, saved that money for just one year, and donated it to organizations that provide safe drinking water, then everyone on the planet could access safe water! It isn't a question of whether or not we can—it's a question of whether or not we will!

### Myth 3: My consumer choices do not affect water issues.

#### Bet again.

**Think waste:** Canada's factories collectively use 16.5 billion litres of water a day,<sup>11</sup> enough for the daily drinking needs of 6,892,694,063 people. It takes 400,000 litres of water to produce a single car, and another 500 litres per fill-up to produce the gas!<sup>12</sup>

Think unequal access: In many countries, water that could be used by local people and farmers for survival is instead used to create export goods such as computers, clothing and gasoline for wealthy consumers in developed countries (like Canada!).

**Think pollution:** The food we buy has major effects on water pollution. We've already seen that animals raised for food produce more poop than we do—and it often ends up in our water. Then consider those pesticides, which run off crops and also creep into our water; even small doses are enough to make billions of litres of water unsafe!<sup>13</sup> So even buying products as un-watery as burgers or non-organic apples have an impact.

#### Myth 4: The water cycle and treatment systems mean we can use as much water as we want without any risk of running out of water any time soon.

Global water consumption is doubling every 20 years—more than twice the rate of human population growth. The Earth's water is stored below ground in aquifers, which are being drained faster than they can replenish themselves, and the freshwater being pumped out of lakes and rivers is causing streams to run dry.<sup>14</sup> The effects are already showing! Here in Canada, 26% of municipalities reported water shortages in the past decade!<sup>15</sup>

In addition, because water must be heated, treated and circulated through our system, it isn't just water that gets wasted as it goes down the drain. All these activities use energy, often in the form of burning fossil fuels. Chemicals used include chlorine, fluorine and caustic soda (not a synonym for 'carbonated beverage'!). So conserving water also means reducing energy and chemical use!

## Myth 5: Drinking bottled water is better for my health, and besides, what's the big deal anyway?

A recent study by the US Natural Resources Defence Council looked at 103 brands of bottled water and found that one-third of them actually contained contaminants—including synthetic chemicals, bacteria and arsenic—at levels exceeding health guidelines (which are actually less strict for bottled water than they are for tap water<sup>116</sup>). Plus, bottled water leaves behind 1.5 million tonnes of plastic *every year*, and emits thousands of tonnes of carbon dioxide in the transportation of the bottled water to your town.<sup>17</sup>

Geez, for having only one droplet, we sure are wasteful with our water! While I initially thought that I, Levi Goertz, had nothing to do with the world's water problems, now it seems like everything I do affects the issue! My bottle of water, my trips to the toilet, my very green lawn—it all makes a huge difference. It's so hard in my world of plentiful water to imagine a life in which every last drop is necessary for survival. Do I really need 343 litres of water a day? Why do we take more than we need? Could we all save our ice cream money in order to bring clean water to everyone? What's taking us so long to wake up about water?

# Mirror

#### Jocelyn Land-Murphy, OTTAWA. MAY 8, 2002

I GREW UP HEARING the line that I should finish the food on my plate, since there were 'starving children in Africa.' I whined and complained, as many children do, trying to retort that even if I finished my spinach it wouldn't help the kids 'over there'—that in the garbage or in my stomach, what difference did it make? My parents were adamant that it was a matter of respect and awareness.

Well, now I've been 'over there', to Africa, and yes, I have seen the children that would (and did) eat many of my 'leftovers'. I now understand what my parents were talking about.

But I have also seen dehydrated children, lips cracked and dry, eyes sunken, the ones that could drink my 1 L bottle of water faster that I have ever seen anyone in Canada chug even the fastest beer. 70.4% of Ugandans go without access to clean water. The concept of drinking water is foreign, and the only water used is for cooking. As I'm learning everyday, water is Africa's biggest constraint to development.

My respect for water grew slowly. While in Kenya, I rarely showered, but that was more out of laziness than anything else. When we hit the coast and 'finally' had running water, I found myself having a quick shower every morning after my run, when for two months prior this hadn't been necessary. One day, our coordinator rounded up the students to tell us that we were draining all the water out of the village. My tent-mate Sabrina and I stopped flushing the toilet when we peed, and I started having very short showers. I patted myself on the back and told myself that surely I was doing my part to be a sustainable water consumer. But I was wrong.

When I did my laundry I still used two buckets half-filled with water when one alone surely would be enough. I still left the tap on for more

#### MIRROR

than one second when I brushed my teeth. I still showered every day. I was oblivious in my bubble.

A month later I arrived on my own in Uganda. All of a sudden there were no taps, no purified water. I was lost. What was I supposed to do? I asked the mucusu (hut 'hotel') owner where I could get water. She gave me a funny look, and told me that all the other mzungus (white people) she'd met brought their own bottled water, that the nearest pump was ten miles down the road, and that I might not have permission to use it. My face fell, thoughts running through my head about dehydration, my heart problems, my already low blood volume and the risks this posed—I knew that I couldn't walk 20 miles in 40° heat for water that I might not even get. I was dizzy already. I'd already been eight hours without water. I felt like I was going to start to cry.

The mucusu owner's daughter tugged on her arm, spoke to her in their dialect. Her mother then nodded at me, told me they'd been collecting rainwater and that I could have some if I truly needed it. I was relieved, ecstatic, and overwhelmed with the logistics of it all. Should I pay them for the water? How much should I take? Should I clean it? They would certainly see me if I did, and I'd been told this is rude.

I tried to calculate in my head what I would need. With drinking, cooking, and washing dishes it could easily be 6 litres. This was obviously too much. I settled on 2 L, and brought my water bottles over to the precious bucket. They were all standing around watching as I poured the water into the bottle. I was nervous and somehow I dropped my bottle—it hit the ground and I lost almost 300 ML. All the women made this "tsk" sound with their tongues, and shook their heads. I tried to apologize but felt my face turning red. How could I have been so careless?

The daughter filled up the rest of my water for me, and I tightened the lids quickly and went to my hut. I was so embarrassed. I felt ignorant and wasteful. I cooked quickly and pretended to be asleep. Night came, and when I woke up at 5 AM, I left more than enough money on the floor and left before anyone could see me. I didn't want to see their disappointed faces, I didn't want them to see the shame in mine.

One week later I was in Kampala with my friend Pat, and Beatrice—a Ugandan girl our age who we'd brought along with us, as she'd never been 'touring' as we mzungus do, and we could certainly afford to pay her way. She wanted to thank us by bringing us to her relatives outside the city (i.e., in the slum). She looked me up and down and obviously there was something not appropriate about my appearance. I thought it was the dirt on my legs so I tried to pour a little water into my hand, rub away the dirt. The water dripped off my leg, onto the floor as I was doing this. Beatrice told

me quietly but sternly that I'd dropped water onto the floor—I nodded, I knew that—then I looked up, there was a small crowd watching me perform this ridiculous, wasteful act. My face went red once again and I wanted to hit my head against the wall. Why couldn't I get this through my head?

As the weeks went by I felt myself adjusting. I didn't spill when I poured from the town pump, I didn't carry my water bottle in public, I didn't bathe but I scrubbed myself clean out of respect, I washed my laundry in the lake but I didn't use soap, I was down to 2 L/day max, cooking included —finally I respected and appreciated every ml.

Then I arrived in London and the flush toilet boggled my mind—I couldn't get myself to flush it so I didn't. I went to the sink and found it hard to believe it was there, that there were taps, with water, and it was clean!! I pressed down the button to wash my hands, but then I couldn't turn it off—water continued to flow out, down the drain, wasted. I was appalled. The girl next to me explained that it was automatic to 'save water.' I put my bottle under it and pressed down once again—one push filled the entire bottle—one full litre of water! So this was the minimum amount the engineer figured would be necessary to wash one's hands. I felt sick to my stomach.

I met up with Jess in France the next day, and amidst our crazed catching up we touched on the water issue. One of the main objections/criticisms we'd received about our sustainable consumption ideas was that water is not in short supply in Canada, that no harm is done if it comes out of our lake, down our drain, back into the water table—none is lost, we can't send it to Africa even if we wanted to. We couldn't come up with a viable answer to that one and yet I continued to conserve religiously, although I wasn't too sure why.

At our meeting with Isabella Marras from the Sustainable Consumption Division at the Paris office of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), we asked her opinion on the issue, and she told us that it's a matter of respect. I liked this, I could relate. I quoted her in my journal and vowed to think more about it later.

I'm home now, and I've told my parents that from now on I don't flush the toilet when I pee, that they shouldn't either, and that there are more efficient ways to have showers. My step-dad's not too into it, but isn't totally challenging me either. In preparing for the debate to come, I've come up with two logical, reasonable reasons:

1. There are 15 million other species on this earth with whom we are sharing the water.

#### MIRROR

2. When water goes down that drain it needs to be treated—energy is used and chemicals are added. No one can argue that that's not detrimental.

But the reason that I feel in my heart is still the respect issue. When it comes down to it, it's just like my parents 'food argument' the reason I don't waste water is because there are children in Africa dying of dehydration. There are people everywhere dying of dehydration. Why is this concept so hard to accept when the food argument is considered 'common sense'? Why is it so hard to respect a resource so valuable?

**I've spoken with hundreds** of people who save water and their reasons are many. Whether you conserve water out of respect, out of concern about the burning of natural gas to heat it and the chemicals to purify it, or to decrease your personal CO2 emissions and ecological footprint, it all comes down to appreciating water as a fundamental need and right for humans. I personally conserve water for the more tangible resource reasons, but also because when I see water going down the drain I think of how someone from Joss' journal entry would feel if they were standing beside me. I have come to recognize that any dialogue I have with myself about the water crisis has to involve the word 'I'.

Everyday we make choices that drastically affect our water consumption—check out how much water is required to...







\* A bucket of water collected from your last shower (See the Action Recipe)

\*\* Not flushin' after you pee. The second part of this saying goes: "If it's brown, flush it down."



So what can be done? Who's responsible? Even if I agree that 'I' need to be included in the discussion, aren't governments and big agencies like the World Bank the ones who should solve this problem? Of course, but no matter how big or small the problem, I do think that a solution can be achieved through the awesome power of people... people like you and me taking action now!

There is already a tidal wave of movement towards water conservation, protection, celebration, and respect. Here are just a few stories about truly incredible people who, by showing how much they care, have added to the power of the wave. After reading these stories, I hope you'll jump on the good times water conservation bandwagon and feel the sweetness of the ride.

### Ryan's Well

Let us introduce you to our friend Ryan Hreljac from Kemptville, Ontario.<sup>23</sup> When he was 6 years old, his grade one teacher Mrs. Prest told the class there are many people in Africa who do not have access to clean drinking water, and who are constantly sick and even dying as a result. Ryan was speechless. He could not understand how some people on the planet could be without any water, while for him it was simply a matter of turning on the tap. He learned, however, that a well could be built in one of these places where it was so desperately needed for only \$70.

When Ryan got home that day, he went straight to his parents and said, "Mom, Dad, can I have 70 dollars?" Not surprisingly, they said no. But they did agree to help him find ways to raise the money. By doing extra chores around the house for his parents and his neighbours, Ryan eventually raised his \$70. He took the money to WaterCan, a non-profit organization that provides clean water to developing countries (and he even brought an extra \$5 to provide lunches for those who would build the well). The people at WaterCan were, of course, incredibly inspired by Ryan's hope and enthusiasm, but had to tell him that it actually cost \$2000 to build a well! "No problem," Ryan thought, replying, "Well, I'll just do more chores then!" His parents knew that their windows could only be washed so many times, so they decided to join him in his cause and formally established an organization called 'The Ryan's Well Foundation' (www.ryanswell.ca) to raise money for his dream. From there, 6-year-old Ryan gathered up everyone he knew to help him raise enough money to build his well.

Six months later, in January 1999, The Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief (CPAR) drilled 'Ryan's Well' beside Angolo Primary School in northern Uganda. When Ryan was given the opportunity to see his well, the experience changed his life even more than he had ever expected; being there caused him to realize that he could do even more. So he did! By the end of 2004, *13-year-old* Ryan and his organization have helped raise over one million dollars for 137 water projects in Uganda, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Malawi, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Nigeria, Guyana and Guatemala!

#### EMPOWERMENT

This one little boy saw inequality in the world and decided to do something about it. Millions of people around the world are now helping Ryan and his foundation. People are helping him by fundraising, by conserving water, and by showing our most valuable resource the respect that it deserves.

Imagine what could be done if every time someone went to buy bottled water, they instead decided to fill up a water bottle for free from a tap. They could give the money they saved to Ryan's Well or another organization that works on solving water problems. Triple whammy, my friends—not supporting the commodification of water, increasing access to water worldwide, and creating no garbage! Yahoo! We can all take part in the global water revolution!



Bolivian water protestors in Cochabamba (see map on next page)

Austin, Texas, USA: Water conservation and education efforts by city officials have caused water consumption to drop by approximately 440,160 L (equivalent to 10 full swimming pools) each month!<sup>24</sup> **Ontario, Canada:** In the summer of 2004, The *Cirque du Lake Water Cycle Circus* inspired awareness, enthusiasm, and constructive change on water issues by cycling their wacky, watery theatre performances around the Great Lakes, from Kingston to Tobermory.<sup>29</sup>

Mexico: The children of the Oikos-Mexico (Environmental Student Organization) go from house to house telling people how important it is to recycle solid waste and to use less water and electricity. More than two hundred children and adolescents in Mexico City, Chiapas and Guerrero have conducted a programme called "Saving Our Water" on Mexican radio.<sup>27</sup>

**Cochabamba, Bolivia:** When Cochabamba's water supply was privatised by a US corporation, Oscar Olivera helped mobilize the people of Cochabamba to protest the fact that families were paying a third of their income for water. Tens of thousands of people participated in the protests, and the sale of the city's water was cancelled<sup>26</sup>

Sasse, Cameroon: Over 50% of the 8 000 people living in Sasse do not have access to safe drinking water, so three youth—Ajebe, Wouvala and Ndifoh—established a foundation with different groups in the community to promote solutions to the water crisis. Their idea for Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) has helped to reduce poverty, improve health, and raise the quality of life for the people in Sasse—all while protecting the local ecosystems!<sup>28</sup>

#### EMPOWERMENT

Netherlands: The Young Water Action Team, YWAT, has established a global movement of young people who are interested in water and who initiate or participate in local community projects and form local YWAT units. They provide a great forum for youth around the world to share ideas on water. Check out the goodness at www.ywat.org! India: 'Drip irrigation systems' have decreased the amount of water used by individual farmers by 40-70%, and increased yields by 20-100%.<sup>25</sup>



These stories are just inklings of the vast collective action that is happening across Canada and around the world. The diversity of the people involved and the solutions that are being enacted are incredible. I can't wait to hear about the actions *you* are taking (hint: I can't wait to get your emails at info@otesha.ca)! Can you feel the good vibrations jumping off the page? Do you love the people who are rocking the water bandwagon? You love it, I know you love it. Are you going to crank it up a notch and someday have people write about your actions? You very well might... I can feel it. I'm telepathically feeling your motivation right now. Bring the funk, my friends, and enjoy the goodness of water.



# Action

### **DIY Toilet Dam**

If spending lots of money on a low-flow toilet isn't your game, there are many cheap and easy ways to save water with that toilet! Whether you already let the yellow mellow and use grey water to flush, or you're just starting out with this water-saving game, you can try this makeshift, water-displacing 'toilet dam'!

#### Ingredients

- 1 empty 1L plastic jar (like the peanut butter ones)—with lid\*
- 1 big rock (or anything heavy that won't degrade... pennies, hockey pucks, a paperweight, etc)\*\*

#### Directions

- 1 Drop the rock or other heavy item into the jar, fill it up with water, and re-seal the lid really tight!
- 2 Lift the lid off the back of your toilet.
- 3 Flush the toilet and once the water has emptied out, place the jar inside the tank. Make sure it isn't touching any of the moving parts, or impeding their movement, necessary for the toilet to flush (for most toilets the jar should be on the left hand side)!
- 4 Replace the lid on the back of the toilet. Back away slowly from the toilet and sneak inconspicuously out of the bathroom. Whistling and looking into the sky, pointing at birds or clouds helps to deflect suspicion.

#### Congratulations, you will now be saving 1L with every flush!

<sup>\*</sup> Instead of a peanut butter jar, you can use a 2L soda pop bottle filled with water.

<sup>\*\*</sup> Don't use a bunch of small rocks; small rocks disintegrate more easily and if by

chance the jar lid opens, you will end up with rocks in your toilet tank!

#### ACTION

If you want to go further, why not be a Water Savin' Ambassador and perform this action in your local schools, public libraries, theatres, community centres and other public venues. We suggest placing a note inside—that way if someone finds the jar they know why you put it there. The note could look like this:

### Hill am a TOILET DAM

I've been placed here by an H20-ooligan to save 1 litre of water with every flush! (THAT COULD BE MORE THAN 2,000L PER YEAR!) Join the water revolution and become an Hzo-ooligan yourself by putting something similar in the back of your toilet tanks. Here's a flush to a future where everyone respects H20 starting, of course, with you! FLUSH!

### **DIY Grey Water Recycling System**

Ever thought about why we use fully treated drinking water to flush our toilets and water our gardens, lawns and plants? Well, we don't have to! Why not create your own grey water recycling system in your house!

#### Ingredients

- 1 big bucket per shower
- 1 smaller bucket per sink

#### Directions

- 1 Whenever you are taking a shower, or using the sink to wash your hands or dishes, keep the bucket under the tap and collect as much as you can of the water that would have gone down the drain. For the shower, this works especially well when you initially turn on the taps and wait for the water to get warm.
- 2 Next time you flush the toilet:
  - a) Lift up the cover of the back of the toilet tank.
  - b) Wait for the black "stopper" to plug the tank.

c) Use any water that doesn't have food particles in it (don't worry if it's soapy, but please use biodegradable soap!) to fill up the back of your toilet tank.

Congratulations! Next time you flush, your 'grey water' will flush the toilet, instead of the tank being filled with freshly treated water!

You can use any other leftover water on your lawn, in your garden (except for salad vegetables!) or to water your houseplants. If you get really ambitious, you can even get a rain barrel to put under your eaves trough to catch rainwater too!

### H2O-ooligan on the loose workshop

#### Ingredients

- Some friends or strangers—any age
- 2 bottles
- 1 litre of water
- A venue (place to chill and chat)
- About 15 minutes

#### Directions

- 1 Using the cartoon illustration from the beginning of this chapter as a reference, show the friends or strangers how precious water is.
- 2 After looking at the lonely, single drop of fresh water we have left, start a discussion about ways you can save water.
- 3 Show & tell with a toilet dam or anything else from the Action Addict.
- 4 Have everyone make a toilet dam, or other water saving device.

#### -----

#### Have a cool recipe for action? Share it here!

In	gredients
•	
•	
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Di	irections
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4	

ACTION

ACTION ADDICT

Teeth. Brughed with the tap turned off!

Hand, Mad cash saved from not buying bottled water. Ponating it to Ryan's Well. Hair, wajked with a staggered shower (water on while wetting and rinsing, off while lathering) while rinse water was collecting in a bucket for grey water!

Hand, Holding a re-usable water bottle filled up at the tar!

Bag, Peanut butter jar for toilet-damming.

Knees: dirty from weeding the lawn and gardening by hand instead of using water polluting chemicals. Stownek: Filled with organic reggies, tofu and beans (no polluting manure and pesticides).

Feet. Walking to a weeting of local organizations pushing for a ban on pesticided lawns.

# **Go Further!**

Still thirsty for more solutions? Here are some more places to go from here!



**Reading:** Maude Barlow & Tony Clarke (2002). Blue Gold: The Battle Against Corporate Theft of the World's Water. Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Co Ltd. Bernadette McDonald (2003). Whose Water Is It?: The Unquenchable Thirst of a Water-Hungry World. National Geographic Society.

Julie Stauffer (2003). The Water You Drink. Canada: Black Rose Books.



Field Trip: Visit your local water treatment plant with your class or friends and find out what really goes down...





**Detective Work**. Calculate your daily water use at: www.ec.gc.ca/water/images/info/pubs/brochure/ e\_log.htm and challenge your family and friends to some water reducing shenanigans.

This website calculates only direct water use—take on the challenge of researching and creating a direct *and* indirect water use calculator (indirect being the water used to produce your food, paper, etc.) and add it here or send it to us!



Letter: What are your views on the commodification of water, water pollution by farms and factories, pesticide use, and other local water issues? Make your voice heard!

Address a letter to your local elected representative (federal = "MP"; provincial = "MPP" or "MLA"; municipal = "Councillor"), or to the applicable Minister, or to *The Big Tofu* (federal = Prime Minister; provincial = Premier; municipal = Mayor). Find your MP's name and address here: http://canada.gc.ca/directories/direct\_e.html and don't forget to include a copy of your letter in this book so other people can read it too!

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- 20 Environment Canada. Quick Facts.
- 21 Environment Canada. Quick Facts.
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- 23 All information from personal discussions and correspondence with Ryan and his family, and the Ryan's Well Foundation web site: www.ryanswell.ca
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# Removing the Blinders



I have that favorite pair of jeans. You know the kind I'm talking about—I have worn life into their very seams. They hang together by a few bare threads, and my multiple patching attempts haven't been able to save them. However, on random Sunday afternoons I rescue them from the bottom drawer and put them on. As I zip them up, I sigh and smile, revelling in their absolute comfort.

I, Jessica Lax—your fashion savvy narrator

for this chapter—wonder why I love those jeans so much. Why does any piece of clothing appeal to me? It's just a bunch of material sewn together, right?

Then I remember the hours spent in front of my closet trying to determine exactly what I wanted to wear for that first day of school, that job interview, that first date. The hundreds of loads of laundry I have done in my lifetime. The jackets, the shoes, the belts—entire days spent at the mall. The hours of my time spent making the money to buy that favorite pair of jeans. The switch in my attitude and confidence level depending on my personal packaging. The constant flux of new and old clothing, coming in and out of my closet, life, and identity.

Just material? I'm not so sure...

Let's go behind the scenes of my fave jeans.<sup>1</sup> Cue the Fact Box!

## (LOTHING FACT BOX

- Hourly wage of the average clothing industry worker in Pakistan (making clothing for mostly North American shoppers): 23 cents.<sup>2</sup>
- Hourly wage of Philip Marineau, head-honcho of Levi-Strauss & Co. clothing (2002): 1,197,115 cents.<sup>3</sup>
- Portion of Nike's advertising budget needed to raise the wages of workers in Nike's 6 Indonesian factories to a liveable standard: 1%<sup>4</sup>
- Children involved in exploitative child labour around the world: 250 million.<sup>5</sup>
- There are sweatshops\* throughout North America (including Toronto, L.A. and New York), not just in developing countries.<sup>6</sup>
- Percentage of the world's annual pesticide and insecticide consumption that is applied to cotton plants: 10% and 25%, respectively.<sup>7</sup>



\* sweatshop: Any workplace where workers are subjected to extreme exploitation, including low wages (lower than the living wage), long hours, working conditions that endanger safety or health, and/or denial of basic human rights. A sweatshop can exist even when the factory is following local laws.



Just as clothing affects me much more than it would appear at first glance, from what I can see it also has a major effect on the earth and the people who live on it! I can't believe that all that worker exploitation, inequality, and chemical pollution was behind my one pair of jeans. I bet you every piece of clothing in my closet has a story just like this, and I'm guessing the story gets more and more complicated as we go further behind the scenes...

# **Clothing Myths**

#### Myth 1: Sweatshops provide much-needed jobs in developing countries. We're doing people a favour.

Sure, *bad* jobs are better than *no* jobs. But sweatshop wages are almost always under the **living wage\***, meaning that the young women (90% of all sweatshop workers are women)<sup>8</sup> who work 12 hours a day inside a factory can't even meet their basic needs of food, water, and shelter. They cannot afford to educate their children, who often end up having to enter into the same work simply to survive—continuing the cycle of poverty.

We should start by asking why there are *no good* jobs to begin with—why are people in developing countries fleeing their farms and homes in the countryside to flock towards bad jobs in the factories? The answer, unfortunately, also relates to our consumption choices and the unfair trade we often unknowingly support. Farmers are forced to sell their land because the price they receive for their crops has dropped below the cost of growing them, or they cannot compete with cheap food imports from the United States and Europe, which have been made artificially low through government subsidy.<sup>9</sup> They are left with no other option but to pursue a 'better life' working at a bad job in a sweatshop.

These bad jobs exist because of what is called the 'race to the bottom'. This phenomenon happens as companies do what they do best—maximize their profit. One way to do this is to search for ways to produce goods in the cheapest way possible. In the quest to attract foreign companies and provide jobs to their people, governments 'race' against each other to lower the minimum wage, weaken or eliminate laws protecting workers and the environment, and waive all taxes, trade tariffs, and fees for water and electricity. Essentially, many poor countries are sacrificing everything to get the bad jobs, and if another country offers even lower costs somewhere else next week, a company can pack up overnight and leave the local workers, environment and economy devastated.

So, *bad* jobs, regardless of why they exist or why people take them, may still be better than no jobs. However, we have the power to demand that companies put human rights before corporate greed, and turn those bad jobs into the good jobs we all deserve.

<sup>\*</sup> living wage: The wage required to meet basic needs (food, shelter, water), as opposed to the minimum wage, which is the legal wage made by the government. The minimum wage is often drastically lower than the living wage, as a way for governments to attract foreign companies

In this era of concern for civility, decency, and family values, sweatshops are repugnant to our moral core. It is wrong to value fashion when we do not value the people who make fashion real... Sweatshops reflect too vividly how we as a nation feel about the weakest among us. And it is such an 'underground' problem that there is no definitive source on how many sweatshops operate in this country. But we know this: One is one too many. –ALEXIS HERMAN, US Secretary of Labour (1997-2001)<sup>10</sup>

# Myth 2: Corporations usually have no idea how little their factory workers are getting paid.

Companies *choose* the contractors who make their products in other countries, and from looking at the amount that they are paying the contractors, it doesn't take much mathematical know-how to figure out that those contractors can't be paying a fair wage to their workers. The problem is motivation: as long as shoppers are willing to base their purchasing decisions on price alone, companies will continue to choose



contractors on that basis as well. If we demand fair labour standards, and companies realize that their sales (and therefore their profits) depend on living up to those standards—improvements won't take long to happen.

# Myth 3: If companies pay their workers more, the price of our clothes will go up.

Dr. Robert Pollin, a professor of economics at the University of Massachusetts, found that a men's shirt retailing for \$32 in the US costs \$4.74 to produce in Mexico. Of that amount, 52 cents goes to production workers, and 52 cents to supervisors. "You could double the production workers' wages, and hardly anyone but the workers would be able to tell the difference," Polin argues.<sup>11</sup>

The availability of funds to pay for a fair working environment boils down to how responsible a company *chooses* to be. We consumers can totally insist on fair wages and labour conditions, *and* affordable clothing! Oh yeah, you betcha!

# Myth 4: Buying clothing that is made in Canada will solve all of these sweatshop problems.

Sweatshops exist in Toronto, Montreal and Los Angeles, too—and not just for clothes! Sweatshop-like conditions exist in the electronics, agricultural, meatpacking, and service industries (particularly restaurants), among others. Therefore, buying Canadian doesn't guarantee that it was made under fair working conditions, or that you are making a purchase that is working towards a sweat-free solution. It's important to research *all* the companies that we support.

The current global economic system is interconnected. With the race to the bottom and the constant increase in global trade where our stuff is manufactured all over the world, bad jobs anywhere lead to bad jobs everywhere! We must demand fair wages for every worker, in every industry, in *every* country!

#### Myth 5: Buying leather is just a way of making use of the by-products of the meat industry.

Leather is not merely a slaughterhouse by-product: "Every year, the global leather industry slaughters more than a billion animals and tans their skins and hides."<sup>12</sup> Many animals whose skins are taken suffer all the horrors of factory farming, including extreme crowding and confinement, branding, the removal of body parts without painkillers, and cruel treatment during transport and slaughter. Definitely *not* summer camp for cows!

Unlike traditional tanning methods, modern industrial leather tanning is no friend of the environment, since it shares all the environmental destruction of the meat industry, *in addition* to the innumerable toxins used in tanning. As you might have guessed, it takes a lot of chemicals to keep the skin of animals (i.e. leather!) from decomposing in your closet!<sup>13</sup>

#### Myth 6: The clothing industry may have a big impact on people and animals, but its impact on the planet is minimal. Mother Earth called. She ain't happy...

**Pesticides:** Cotton is the most heavily pesticide-sprayed crop in the world,<sup>14</sup> and also one of the most heavily irrigated (water-wasting).<sup>15</sup> Hemp clothing is a great alternative—it's much less dependent on pesticides and it's also much more durable. Cool!

**Dyes:** Don't you love the deep, blue colour of denim? Ever wondered how jeans get that blue? They (and many of our other toxic fashions) need to be dipped in all kinds of chemicals to get them that way. As a result, workers and their local waterways get exposed to chemicals such as caustic soda, chlorine, laccase (yeah, we know, one would never suspect laccase!), detergents, peroxide, oxalic acid, and sodium bisulphate.<sup>16</sup>

**Oil:** Polyester shirts begin as a few tablespoons of petroleum. Each polyester shirt we buy helps send more oil drills into the ground. Plus, the process of refining the petroleum into polyester sends carbon dioxide into the atmosphere—9 times more than the polyester's weight!<sup>17</sup> And these days, every

shopping trip seems to add one more oil-based plastic bag to Canada's 567 million plastic bags a year!  $^{\rm 18}$ 

**Laundry:** Machine wash and dry your poly-cotton t-shirt ten times and you've already used as much energy as was used to manufacture it in the first place! Plus, you've released soap (and bleach if you use nasty detergents) into the water system.<sup>19</sup>

**Transportation:** Moving shirts from around the world in planes, boats, and trucks to our Canadian outlet stores releases tonnes (literally, like millions of tonnes!) of carbon dioxide, contributing to climate change.

# Myth 7: The few ethical clothing companies out there are expensive and not very fashionable.

You may not be able to find ethical clothing at Walmart yet, but thanks to thousands of consumers who asked for more, and creative entrepreneurs who put their values into their business, there are tons of great options out there! Compare the two fashion ensembles on the opposite page.

But perhaps the most ethical clothing of all can be found at your local thrift store! Every time you buy a piece of used clothing, you can rest assured that *no* new resources were used, *no* additional toxic pollution seeped into the environment, and no one toiled away in a factory for your purchase. And these ethical clothes are definitely not expensive; you can find a funky outfit for way cheaper. You could also do a clothing swap with your friends (see the action recipes) or learn how to sew your own masterpiece!

## THE ETHICAL ALTERNATIVE

## THE NORM



Californía Plece, Zíp hoodie, sweatshop free: \$58 www.americanapparel.net

Reversible zippered hoodie, Eddie Bamer, \$59.50

Short Sleeve, organic cotton, wade in a Women's co-operative in Nicaragua: \$11.00 WWW.waggiesorganics.com

> Jersey athletic T by Gap. \$16.50







Jeans, organic cotton, non-toxic dyes, sweatshop-free. \$68 www.certifiedjean.com

Red tab see carpenter jeans, Levi's: \$69.99





Leather, Chuck Taylor All-Star 'Peace' Converse sneakers, \$85





# Mirror

The more I learn, the more my interactions with fashionable pieces of material (a.k.a. clothing!) change. Seeing the impacts of a seemingly harmless t-shirt or pair of jeans just blow me away! To tell you the truth, I find the information we just read a little overwhelming. But the more we explore these issues, the more I start to understand my role in this whole situation.

#### Kristin Ryan, Toronto, August 10, 2003

WHEN I FIRST HEARD about The Otesha Project I was so excited to join the group that before I had heard back from the team, I quit my job and made travel arrangements to meet up with them. I couldn't wait to bike all the way across Canada to talk to youth about the everyday positive impacts that each and every one of us can have on the entire world. But I was blind to the negative impacts I personally had on the Earth and its inhabitants.

Before joining Otesha, I was working at a sportswear store. I was the top sales person and sold thousands of dollars worth of merchandise weekly. I was making commission, which of course only motivated me to sell more clothes, more accessories, and more shoes—mostly made by corporations that use child labour.

#### MIRROR

On one of my first bike rides with the Otesha team, my bike partner told me a true story about a young girl working in a factory in China. This young girl worked 12-hour days in 104-degree temperatures spraypainting Barbie dolls. The fumes from the paint were so toxic that she was vomiting in a bucket at her workstation.

I let my bike partner take the lead that day as the tears streamed down my face. I realized that it wasn't just Barbie dolls—it was lots of other things too, like clothing and sports equipment and shoes: all things that I used myself, and things that I had sold in the store I worked at. Not only had I been supporting child labour, I had been selling as much of it as I could.That was when the mirror was held so close to my face that I could see that I was part of the problem.

**Reading Kristin's story** gives me a strange feeling in my stomach. When I look in the mirror now, trying on new clothes at the store, her words are in the back of my head. And I can't help but look at myself, and my actions, in a whole new way.

I now know that companies can move from country to country wherever the wages are lowest, exploitation is the easiest, and the pollution limits are the most lax. I also know that as a consumer, I am often part of the problem. There has to be a solution out there that fits just right!

# Empowerment

**My buddy Simon loves to say**, "Our wallets are like election polls right next to our bums." As spenders of dollars (whether occasional or frequent), we have tremendous power: we can either choose to continue supporting the current system and all of its negative impacts, or choose to support one that is in line with our ideals and values. If I want a world where cattle aren't slaughtered for their hides, waterways aren't polluted with pesticides and toxins, and workers are given fair wages, I need to start with my actions. When I do buy stuff, I need to cast my vote for the world I want to see.

So, off to the polls I go—to vote for those companies that pay their workers a living wage, manufacture alternatives to leather, and produce organic cotton. Change lies on the bottom line, and happens one dollar and one clothing shopper (me!) at a time.

Let's check out some awesome examples of people taking this idea past their closet!

## Local 23 More than Just a Clothing Store

#### Shoshanah Waxman

At the outskirts of Mile End, a neighborhood in Montreal, there is a revolutionary little store called *Local 23*. Part art gallery, part thrift store, part fashion boutique, all local. Sitting down over a cup of tea with Jennifer Glasgow (one of the three owners and designer of the 'Glasgow' label that Local 23 carries), I finally got the chance to dig deeper into the story behind Local 23.

Jen and her two partners in crime—oops, I mean business—the aptly named Jess and Gen, set out nine months ago with a modest goal: to do what they love—make art and clothes out of recycled materials—and do it in a way that stimulates the local economy.

Fed up with the monster that is the fashion industry, Jen decided to do it her own way. Her work is true to her ideals. She aims to make people feel good in her designs, silk-screening empowering messages on her clothes.

Greatest of all is that the clothes are guilt free! The in-house line, 'Bunny Wear' (a fundraiser for a community charity) features handmade patches and silk-screen prints of rabbits on 'found' or recycled items. She also makes clothes out of material from the ends of the rolls—that wouldn't be purchased by bigger manufacturers. And when she must have clothes made by someone else, she contracts the work out to a company that hires and trains disadvantaged women in order to reintroduce them into the work force. Conditions are good, they receive a fair wage, and many choose to stay on with the company once their training is finished. Jen says she feels proud to have been able to make these decisions: to be able to put these pieces on the racks, and know that no one was taken advantage of in the process.

While designers have approached them from Toronto, Jen, Gen and Jess have chosen to keep the store local, and special to the people around them. They have a rack of over 30 CDs put out by local Montreal record labels, and carry independent releases not available at corporate music stores. The store is covered with flyers for community events, and their quaint back yard is available for neighborhood gatherings—they are planning fundraising music events and a community garage sale, with proceeds going to two local charities. Their spirit is hopeful, and one can see that their hard work is paying off for everyone involved, at every level. There's potential for growth in the future, but for now they're happy being small and locally grown.

## City of Vancouver and York Catholic School Board **Go Sweat-Free!**

In April 2004, Vancouver City Council unanimously voted to become Canada's 11<sup>th</sup> 'No-Sweat City'! They resolved to adopt a 'Sustainable and Ethical Procurement' policy by the end of 2004 that requires suppliers of the city's clothing and other products to abide by labour standards of the UN's International Labour Organization, including paying a living wage.<sup>20</sup> This important victory for sweatshop workers and activists was a result of combined efforts of many groups and individuals working together, including the Maquila Solidarity Network, Oxfam Canada, the Canadian Labour Congress, Vancouver and District Labour Council, New Westminster and District Labour Council, and student groups from local universities. Some other cities that have declared their 'lack of sweat': Saskatoon, Toronto, Los Angeles, and New York!

Following that, as a result of tireless lobbying by students and teachers who wouldn't take 'no' for an answer, on June 8, 2004, the York Catholic School Board (with over 51,000 students) adopted a 'Fair Labour Practices Policy'. This policy requires all school uniforms to be manufactured in accordance with international labour standards and local labour laws.<sup>21</sup> That means that clothing from all of the board's new and renewed contracts (from gym uniforms to clothing carrying school names) will be sweatshop-free!

Wow! Those stories make me feel like one day there might not be such a thing as a sweatshop!

Remember that favourite pair of jeans, my absolute comfort pants? I think they just might be the last pair of new jeans that I buy without first looking at the conditions they were made under—one more action towards a sweatshop free world.

The clothes I wear are a big part of my identity, but I now believe that for me, that identity goes deeper than the texture, colour, or cut of my shirt.

I want a closet full of clothing that I feel makes a difference. Bring on the hand-me downs, hemp, organic, homemade, second-hand, and sweatshop free! Ethical fashion show runway here I come!

Barbara Ehrenreich defined solidarity as,

## "The old fashioned word for the love between people who may never meet each other, but share a vision of justice and democracy and are willing to support each other in the struggle to achieve it."

From this day forward, the clothes in my closet, the dollars I spend, and my identity, are going to support that very kind of solidarity.



# Action Recipe(

### **The Frock Swap**

The best way to recycle clothes is to pass them on, and unless you have a convenient younger sibling to give your cast-offs to, they're probably in the back of your closet collecting dust. But there's another way: the clothing swap!

#### Ingredients

- A few friends (the more the merrier)
- A few pieces of clothing you haven't worn in a long time (again, the more the merrier)
- Some open floor space

#### Directions

- 1 Go through your closet and take out everything that doesn't fit, or that you don't like/wear/want anymore.
- 2 Get your friends to do the same. The more people you include, the better your chances of getting good stuff!
- 3 Pick a time and a place. These things can take a bit of time (because you're having such a blast) so it's best to start early, maybe with a potluck. Once everyone is stuffed, move on to the clothes. Now there are two ways to do this:
  - The frenzied, free-for-all approach
  - The orderly method: people go through the items they brought, holding them up so everyone can see. Then people take turns trying on the pieces that interest them.
- 4 Have a riot trying things on, trading back and forth, and passing clothes around. Do a fashion show where everyone shows how stylin' they are in their new duds!
- 5 Go home with your new clothes, satisfied that you got a new look without spending anything or draining the planet's resources.
- 6 Then gather up the leftovers and donate them to a local charity or a thrift store.

## Christmas Carols for Conscious Consumption

#### Ingredients

- Group of 3 or more friends
- Songs like the ones below (copied on re-used paper)
- Some information about sweatshops that you can hand out to people passing by
- Courage!

#### Directions

- 1 Gather together your friends at the height of the Christmas season —maybe start at the mall.
- 2 Hand out lyrics of songs you've written beforehand—sweatshopbusting lyrics all to the tune of well-known Christmas carols.
- **3** Stand in a busy area (sidewalks in front of a mall are public property so they are a great place to try).
- 4 Start singing at the top of your lungs, and have flyers on hand for people who want more info!

#### Don't be Shy\*

(Tune: Jingle Bells) Dashing through the malls On a cold December day Looking for a sale, shopping come what may. You should be aware The pay's not always fair for the women who sew and sweat in factories everywhere. So don't be shy, ask them why Nike can't pay well. When Michael Jordan, we all know gets lots and lots of dough, HEY!

#### Listen to the Message\*

(Tune: Oh, Christmas Tree) Oh shopper dear, come over here and listen to our message. Oh shopper dear, come over here and listen to our message. The women who toil, in far off lands so you can wear your favourite brands, don't get a break-from dawn 'till dusk. It isn't right—let's make a fuss. When buying shirts and pants and stuff ask, "Were the workers paid enough?"

Make up your own carols, add a page and share them here!

<sup>\*</sup> Examples from the Maquila Solidarity Network.<sup>22</sup> Thanks to the Raging Grannies

### **Ethical Fundraiser**

#### Ingredients

- 30 used single-colour T-shirts from thrift store (ideally all different funky colours and styles)
- A few friends (the more the merrier)
- Design that you and/or your friends made, or an empowering message that you want to wear
- Info sheet

#### Directions

- 1 Go to a thrift store, buy some t-shirts, and turn 'em inside out
- 2 Put a funky slogan or design on the shirts. You can use a silkscreen, a fabric marker, stencil and fabric paint, or iron-on transfers that you can print out on a computer.
- 3 Set up a table at your school with an info sheet explaining the tees, child labour and anything else you'd like them to know.
- 4 Sell the tees!
- **5** Give the money you've made to an organization fighting child labour.

Do you have any other cool ideas on how to **make your own clothing?** Share your directions to creating a personal masterpiece!

ACTION



# **Go Further!**



**Reading:** Victoria International Development Education Association (1999). Sweatshop Clothes: The Real Cost of the Clothes We Buy. Available at: www.videa.ca/index.php?pageid=24&productid=2.

**Craig Kielburger and Kevin Major** (1999). Free The Children: A Young Man Fights Against Child Labour and Proves That Children Can Change the World. Perennial.

**Co-op America**. *Guide to Ending Sweatshops*. Available at: www.coopamerica.org/PDF/GuideSweatshops.pdf



Video(: Judy Jackson (1998). It takes a child. Available at: www.freethechildren.com . Maggie's Organics. Ants That Moved Mountains. Available at: www.organicclothes.com/pages-story/ nicaragua.html

National Labour Committee (1996). Mickey Mouse Goes to Haiti.



Volunteering: Start a Free The Children\* chapter: www.freethechildren.com Make your school sweatshop free: www.studentsagainstsweatshops.org/resources.php Host a sweatshop fashion show:

www.maquilasolidarity.org/tools/campaign/fashionshow.htm



**Detective Work**: Go through your closet and find out where all your clothes were made. Research the companies on www.responsibleshopper.org Research your school and gym uniforms.

Research ethical clothing companies, tell your friends, and write them in this book!

\* Free The Children (FTC): founded by 12 yr. old Craig Kielburger, it is the largest network of kids helping kids in the world. FTC works to free children from poverty, exploitation and powerlessness.





**Field Trip**: Visit a local textiles factory, or clothing store, and inquire about the materials used and the labour standards.

Go on a Borderlinks trip to Mexico to see a 'maquiladora' factory first hand: www.borderlinks.org

#### Endnotes

- 1 'Fave' means 'favourite' in fashion diva lingo
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- 5 UNESCO UNEP. Youth X-Change Training Kit.
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- 9 Oxfam. Dumping Without Borders: How US Agricultural Policies are Destroying the Livelihoods of Mexican Corn Farmers. Retrieved December 13th, 2004, from www. mindfully.org/WT0/2003/US-Mexican-Oxfam27aug03.htm.
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- 11 Co-Op America. (2002) Co-op America's guide to Ending Sweatshops and Promoting Fair Trade. New York: Fort Orange Press.
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- 16 Maquila Solidarity Network. *The Journey of a Jean*. Retrieved August 31st, 2004, from www.maquilasolidarity.org/resources/maquilas/journeyofjean.htm.
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- 18 McGill Tribune. Bagbusters Group Takes Action On Plastics. Retrieved August 25th, 2004, from www.mcgilltribune.com/news/2002/01/14/News/Bagbusters. Student.Group.Takes.Action.On.Plastics-164016.shtml.
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- 20 Maquila Solidarity Network. Vancouver ready to become a No Sweat city. Retrieved August 29th, 2004, from www.maquilasolidarity.org/nosweat/cities/vancouver\_ apr2004.htm.
- 21 Maquila Solidarity Network. York Catholic school board plans to join WRC. Retrieved August 27th, 2004, from www.maquilasolidarity.org/nosweat/ schools/york\_jun2004.htm.
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MEDIA





Hi! I'm Shoshanah Waxman, your mediaguru and narrator for this chapter, and there is something you should know about me... I grew up without a TV in my house.

People are often shocked when I divulge that little secret. Sometimes, they gasp and recoil in horror as though I'd told them I've just given birth to a three-headed cow. Other times, their faces contort wildly with confusion, as if they were in a calculus class.

Some people think it's pretty cool, but I must admit I didn't think it was very cool when I was growing up! I'd watch TV at the homes of my friends or family; but if my parents were around, I could watch only Sesame Street or other educational programs—never cartoons! I only half-understood my parents' opinions that TV had too much violence, too many commercials, and discouraged social activity. As a result, I grew up reading books



and playing games and good old-fashioned make-believe with other children (no video games for me!).

By the end of high school, I'd caught up with my peers in the most important areas: I could quote The Simpsons and had probably seen every re-run of Seinfeld and Friends. Then, in university, I took a film studies course, which totally changed the way I look at media. I soon realized that film studies is more like cultural studies, since our culture is communicated and interpreted through various forms of media—TV, radio, movies, magazines, newspapers, plays, etc. I also learned that a film's impact on its audience is not limited to its content, plot and characters. The technical way a movie is put together—camera angles, sound, language, editing—also helps create the film's message to its viewers. The same goes for all the types of media that surround us, constantly bombarding us with information. I became more aware of the subtle ways that the people involved in the media manipulate our emotions, perceptions, and opinions. This awareness made me want to understand the effects of the mass media on our culture and us. I think growing up without TV may have given me 'alien eyes' to develop an open-minded, critical perspective on the media. Now where's that handy Fact Box?

# MEDIA FACT BOX

- Average daily amount of time a North American child sits in front of some type of screen (TV, computer, movie):
  4 hours, 40 minutes.<sup>1</sup>
- Number of television commercials viewed by the average North American child per year: over 20,000 (over 54 per day!)<sup>2</sup>
- US\$ spent annually by advertisers per household: 2,190<sup>3</sup>

ORP

- Number of corporate logos recognizable to the average North American: over 1,000 (no typo — that says 1,000!)<sup>4</sup>
- Number of local plants and animals recognizable to the average North American: under 10<sup>5</sup>

CORP

# **Media Myths**

# Myth 1: Advertising doesn't affect me—I can tell when I'm being advertised to.

The average North American sees 3,000 advertisements *every* day!<sup>6</sup> How could we not be affected by such a bombardment! Think about the number of TV ad jingles you can hum, or the number of brand names you can come up with in 10 seconds—some of that marketing is getting through. Yep, we've all been sucked in, but this didn't just happen by chance: corporations spend billions of dollars on market research and psychological studies to figure out what will get us to buy their products, and billions more on clever advertising campaigns to get us hooked without us ever noticing! Product placements are everywhere—from popular movies to TV

shows, video games, sporting events, public transit (the stairs and floors at the Union Subway stop in Toronto are *covered* entirely with ads!), whole walls of buildings, and now even our schools, including **corporate sponsored curriculum**\*.<sup>7</sup> Just when you thought they couldn't get you anywhere else, the newest fad is 'peer to peer advertising': young people are *hired* to become undercover advertisers amongst their friends—*eckh*!!!

> Yo Yo, this new cheese flavored gum taste (HEESERIFIC while I'm wearing my new air-pocketed HIGHJUMP shoes! I came to all these conclusions myself!

Mellin Con

And they're not just selling us products: together, they're selling us a lifestyle—a mystical dream world of popularity, fun, and success that we can only reach by having the right clothes, gadgets, beauty products and beer. This idea is reinforced by the TV programs we watch and the magazine articles we read—not just the advertisements. We're taught to yearn for that fantasy world, and that we should buy whatever it takes to get there, regardless of the impacts on our self-esteem, our environment, our friends or the other people on the planet.

# Myth 2: Advertisements are simply providing information. We don't have to listen.

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) provide information. They remind us to brush our teeth, to be nice to others, to not drink and drive, and where the local bake sale is happening this weekend. However, of the estimated 12 billion display ads, 3 million radio commercials, and 200,000 TV commercials that are aired every day,<sup>8</sup> PSAs are given last priority for air space. Instead, the vast majority of the advertisements we see and hear are commercially biased messages: they want us to buy their stuff. Since, for most products, they can't convince us with health or ethical reasons, they instead prey on our insecurities (beauty products), our egos (cars), or our national pride (beer), and pressure us to buy products that we don't need (or even really want). They create a need in our minds in order to sell a product, rather than creating a product to fill our actual needs.

## Advertising is the science of arresting the human intelligence long enough to get money from it. -Stephen Leacock, Adcult USA

Image-makers (advertisers, magazines, the fashion industry) determine trends, and then sell us the products that will make us "cool"—the only problem is, what will make you cool today will not make you cool tomorrow. That is not an accident. It's set up to be a race to coolness we can never win (like a dog chasing its tail), so that we keep buying more stuff to chase that elusive dream world.

\* Corporate Sponsored Curriculum is when a company (say, a coal company), puts the money forth to a school to make a textbook (say, one on environmental studies). Too often, corporations have influence over textbook content (say, censoring information on the harms of coal). Not surprisingly, in 1998 80% of corporate sponsored curriculum was declared biased. Unfortunately, many school boards, strapped for cash, continue to go to corporations to get funding for curriculum.

#### MEDIA



Speaking of providing information, it's important to question whether advertisements are telling us the whole story. When was the last time you heard about the life and working conditions of the worker who made a product? Or the materials and energy used to make it? Even when our desire for health is used to convince us to buy a product, what side effects are advertisers leaving out? Indeed, there is far more we should know about the products we buy than is revealed by the catchy jingles we hear.

# Myth 3: Sure, advertisements are biased, but other types of media present a variety of opinions.

## FABO

- Number of radio stations, local television stations, and cable stations owned by the Disney Corporation: 66, 10, and 12 respectively (including all of the ABC network).<sup>9</sup>
- Hourly wage of factory workers making Disney products in South China in 2000: **15 to 35 cents**.<sup>10</sup>
- Number of news articles critical of Disney's labour policies aired on ABC News: (c'mon... guess): **0**!

As my good friend, Fact Box (FaBo for short), points out, some large corporations own national television networks, eliminating all possibility for media coverage that would make the company look bad.

Another example: General Electric—which has been accused of causing human rights violations, high CO2 emissions, use of nuclear power, environmental damage, and other nasty stuff—owns the NBC network.<sup>11</sup>

Even without such clear conflicts of interest, today's media is becoming increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few companies—generally run by rich white men and their shareholders (generally also rich white men)—and is therefore influenced by this small group's views and opinions.<sup>12</sup> Not only that, but most media outlets are for-profit businesses that get their money from advertising. Regardless of who owns them, most media networks won't air news that is critical of big corporations because they depend on the ad-buying dollars of those corporations. Just ask Adbusters; they've been trying for 10 years to run a series of 'social marketing spots'—ads that don't sell products, but instead raise awareness of environmental and social issues ranging from consumerism to obesity to environmental destruction. One of these "un-ads" states that 52% of the calories in a Big Mac come from fat. Adbusters has been trying to purchase airtime for the un-ads, but the major broadcasters (CBC, CTV, CanWest Global, and CHUM) have refused to air the ads, stating that they "don't fit the broadcasters' business model." A representative at CHUM told Adbusters that their un-ads are "counterproductive to what we do. We sell advertising." CTV explained, "We're in the business to make money, and we're in the business to sell our customers products."<sup>13</sup> In the United States, Adbusters' 'uncommercials' were refused by both ABC (Disney) and NBC (General Electric) because they "discourage support for the American economy."14

## We have no obligation to make history. We have no obligation to make art. We have no obligation to make a statement. To make money is our only objective.

- former Disney CEO Michael Eisner<sup>15</sup>

Clearly, this 'corporate controlled media' does little to help us develop informed, critical opinions as citizens, or to promote a truly democratic society.

#### MEDIA

#### Myth 4: Advertisers aren't allowed to manipulate children.

Advertising at its best is making people feel that without their product, you're a loser. Kids are very sensitive to that. If you tell them to buy something, they are resistant. But if you tell them that they'll be a dork if they don't, you've got their attention. You open up emotional vulnerabilities, and it's very easy to do with kids because they're the most emotionally vulnerable. –Nancy Shalek, president of the Shalek Advertising Agency<sup>16</sup>

All ads directed at children under 12 are officially banned in Sweden, Norway, and Quebec.<sup>17</sup> Other countries have strict regulations set in law, but in Canada, the only code for children's ads is a voluntary one, designed by broadcasters and not the public, and does not apply to American broadcasts that find their way onto our television screens.<sup>18</sup>

Full-on manipulative TV advertising starts at age 12. And that's just TV—think of all the other ways advertisers can get at children, like at school! All across the US, companies are cutting deals with public schools that go like this: the company provides televisions to the classrooms on the agreement that students will have to watch the company's pre-packaged 'news programs' in class—the programs, of course, containing a healthy dose of ads for the company's products. These corporations have access to a captive audience of students who are literally incapable of turning the channel.

Children hold tremendous sway over families' consumer choices, and companies are aware of this. Mike Searles, former president of the major children's clothing store Kids-R-Us, argues, "If you own this child at an early age, you can own this child for years to come. Companies are saying, 'Hey I want to own the kid younger and younger.''' After all, as Elliot Ettenberg, head honcho at Prism Communications said, "They're not so much children as what I like to call 'evolving consumers.''<sup>19</sup> Are we crazy for feeling like advertising zombies are coming to eat our brains?

#### Myth 5: Advertising is just a part of life, it's always been there.

Ah, the good old days... when buses weren't rolling billboards... when there were no commercials before the movie... when hockey arenas and baseball stadiums were named after famous athletes instead of big companies... when schools sold juice rather than cola.

While we take these things for granted now, most of us can remember a time before companies took over our common spaces. Ads used to have their place: in magazines and on television. Now they still have those

#### **REMOVING THE BLINDERS**



places, and seemingly every other place too! Everyone seems to believe that we can't hold any events or build any buildings without a 'corporate sponsor'—that without these companies buying up ad space or hosting events, our society will collapse.

This wasn't always the case. During the 1980's, Canada cut taxes big time for businesses in order to stimulate economic growth. And it worked: productivity and profits soared, while government funds for infrastructure, culture, sports, education and health care dried up. Luckily, private companies—tobacco companies, communications companies, pharmaceutical companies, automobile manufacturers—had lots of money and stepped in to finance things that governments could no longer afford to support (including universities and scientific research), as long as they got to put their name on it. In Argentina during the 1990's, even the street signs were sponsored by MasterCard.<sup>20</sup>

We get to keep funding for some parts of our world, but at what cost? Somehow, we've come to a time when science is about developing profitable new products for companies instead of developing creative new ideas to benefit people. Art and sports are more commonly used as marketing vehicles for product placement than as activities to be enjoyed for their pure beauty or cultural meaning. Our idols and heroes have a hard time inspiring us or bringing us hope because they're too busy trying to sell us stuff.

#### Myth 6: Media simply reflects our culture.

Media doesn't simply reflect our culture—it creates our culture! From fashion trends, popular language and music, to our understanding of the environment, politics, and the economy, we learn about our world through the media. Take a look around your school or community, and see the massive influence of 'popular culture' on our attitudes, behaviours, and hairstyles. There have been numerous studies on the impacts of the media (especially television) on our society. Some of the charges include creating a culture of fear and violence,<sup>21</sup> reinforcing gender and racial stereotypes,<sup>22</sup> and contributing to low self-esteem by setting unattainable beauty standards.<sup>23</sup> We might also mention a society-wide shopping addiction that is totally out of touch with what the planet can healthily provide.

This 'culture' involves sitting indoors in front of a talking box! Think of the social and physical impacts of having the average child spend two and a half hours a day passively watching television!<sup>24</sup> We're spending more time watching our culture on TV than actually participating in it!

That was heavy! The more I come to understand how our media, also known as the "entertainment industry," is related to our culture (indeed, the two seem inseparable), the more I question which is having more impact on our culture: us or the media industry? I grew up feeling like I was participating in something, but it looks as though we play such a small role in shaping one of the most important parts of our lives—culture! I also realize how important it is that every person ask these questions, so that we are aware of the way our lifestyle is being influenced by corporate-biased media messages.

I still tend to think that the problem is not inherent to the media itself, but rather how it has been manipulated. I get angry when I notice advertising working on me. I resent the head games, and I want to see and hear the other side of the story for every advertisement... like how fast food companies mistreat animals and employees, how much waste is created in producing and packaging useless products, and how the models used in ads struggle daily with their own self-image. MIRROR



#### Jessica Lax

I HAVE EXPERIENCED painful days of bathing suit shopping and self-diminishing thoughts after flipping through women's magazines. I have seen the low calorie salad dressing religiously carried in a friend's purse to put on every restaurant lettuce meal, and seen the slow eaters who push away that very meal with barely a bite removed. I have seen those who pour chemicals on their hair or skin, and ingest chemicals in their bodies to re-colour or reshape—bringing tummies in or muscles out. I have known those with an obsessive need to exercise, an inability to go a day without make-up, or a willingness to risk death to surgically transform themselves.

#### I have witnessed the battle.

These stories, images, and experiences appear to me as scars and open wounds. They are from a battle that no one ever wins—yet takes years, even lifetimes, to fight. They are from a battle in which I'm more surprised when I meet someone who has never fought, than I am by those who share their scars. It's a battle in which wrinkle creams and hot wax serve as weapons; and creatine, diet pills, and tanning beds cause blow after blow. It's a personal battle where our bodies become the enemy, the obstacle we must overcome to reach the beauty myth we are fighting for.

The beauty myth is more than just a body size—it's the colour of skin, hair and eyes, the length of a body, the size of its muscles, the shape of its nose. In its airbrushed form, it can be found on pages of magazines, on screens and on billboards lining the walkways of our lives. Immortalized in plastic, it can be found modeling our clothes in store windows and taking shape in the dolls we treasure and the hero figurines we own as children.

#### MEDIA

I have scars from the battle—from the media images that bombard me daily that tell me I need to reflect the unattainable perfection to be successful, accepted, and happy. But I am not just a passive victim to these images, I have come to realize that I have perpetuated their very existence.

I have done this not only in my desires to embody unattainable perfection, but in my dollars spent supporting the myth. It has been perpetuated through the magazines I have bought that glorify it, and the beauty products I have purchased that promise they will help me attain it. I have fueled the battle in my very acceptance that the beauty myth is inevitable. My acceptance that whatever the fashion, our health will often be risked in attempts to attain it. I have fuelled the battle with my complacency.

#### But that changed.

Beauty is defined and reflected by each of us, giving each individual the power to fuel the battle or to demonstrate the choice to walk away from it.

#### It changed the day I realized that I have power.

With this power I will not open any more wounds, I will no longer fuel the battle. I will lay down the weapons, I will embrace 'the enemy', and I will walk away.

#### It changed the day I realized that I am beautiful—just as I am.

Like Jess, I have witnessed 'the battle'. I'm not immune to the negative effects of media and advertising, regardless of my TV-free childhood and critical eye. I now have an understanding of why my parents chose to raise me without TV, and, in hindsight, I'm thankful (though I'm not sure I'm going to tell them that yet!).

#### EMPOWERMENT



Although we've only explored how some of today's media stand in our way to real freedom, I personally see another side of the story: that the many forms of progressive media in our society could be the key to our survival as a species. The media has the potential to communicate and share in the realization that we are all here together. The media can send out positive messages (in addition to the pro-tooth-brushing ones) that foster empathy for others, awareness of the world, joy and empowerment—now that's a recipe for action!

So what exactly is progressive, empowering media? Does it really exist? You bet! Here are some awesome stories of how folks have used media in a positive way!

## **A New Dream**

Don't waste your money on wants over needs People in other countries don't have what we do, So why do we waste it? – lyrics from a rap by J-Way (Jalyn Wilson, age 12, Baltimore MD)

The mad-hype 'I Buy Different Hip Hop Contest'<sup>25</sup> run through the **Center for a New American Dream\*** challenged youth from middle schools and youth centres in Baltimore to write their own raps, with the help of local rapper MC Ogun. Through the raps they voiced their views on how our consumer choices affect the environment and on the power of young consumers. The winner won ten hours of studio time to record his own demo at Outta Control Records, and joins a growing movement of popular hip-hoppers and other musicians (like Vancouver's own wicked hip hop band Sweatshop Union) writing songs with socially, politically and environmentally aware messages!

# Do-it-yourself Media

As the tools and resources for creating our own media—from music to publication to film to web—become more user-friendly and accessible (at least in our over-developed society), media is becoming more democratic. More and more people are using the media's power to make their voices heard. Independently published 'zines' (magazines) and books—like this one!—are popping up everywhere. In print and on the web, they provide space for people to make their opinions heard, explore a creative outlet, and start actively engaging with the world instead of watching it on TV.

For example, a few high school and university students in Ottawa decided to take the media into their own hands by launching **Blurt** (blurtzine@yahoo.com), a monthly print 'zine with attitude, insight, info, and action! **Blurt** questions the status quo and rejects the mainstream media—cool independent thinkers gettin' their message out and helping others do the same! All this on a few pieces of regular 8.5 x 11 paper! It's simple, it's cheap (50 cents a month), and it's offering a funktastic alternative to the daily normal!

\* The Center for a New American Dream is an American organization that works with individuals, institutions, communities and businesses to conserve natural resources, counter the commercialization of our culture and promote positive changes in the way goods are produced and consumed (www.newdream.org).
### **Buy Nothing Day!**

On November 24, 1993, the founders of Adbusters Magazine initiated the first Buy Nothing Day (BND).<sup>26</sup> The date was not chosen randomly—it falls on the busiest shopping day of the year: the day after American Thanksgiving. Responding to the excesses of consumerism, BND organizers asked participants to live for 24 hours without spending any money and instead spend their time making food, going for a walk, or hanging out with friends.

In the past 11 years, BND has become an international event, observed by millions of people in over 40 countries. Participation in BND is both an act of resistance to consumer culture and an opportunity to reinvest in those parts of life often taken for granted. Year after year, people take a stand. They forget their wallets, pack a lunch, skip the vending machine, and walk to work... They live the day without spending a dime, and they see how much more life has to offer.

Matt Watkins, a 25 year-old Nova Scotian, took BND 364 steps further and (as of January 2005) is halfway through his 'Buy Nothing Year'!<sup>27</sup>

### TV Turnoff Week<sup>®</sup>

Instead of just complaining about modern life, we're describing an amazing machine that will make you happy, excited and energetic, just by flicking a switch. It's called television—and all you have to do is turn it off.

-Jean Lotus and David Birke, authors of Get A Life

Back in 1994, the TV Turnoff Network decided to take action by encouraging people to break free from the tube and reclaim time for family, friends, and themselves. Over the last ten years, 24 million people have participated in the week, "turning off their TVs, and turning on their lives."

The key to their success has been in asking people to imagine how much they could do, see, and learn—and then take the TV Turnoff Week Challenge. Instead of being 'glued to the tube' people choose to spend the time doing other stuff, like reading a book or a newspaper (or writing their own!), playing the guitar, shooting some hoops, going for a run, making gifts, or anything that involves friends, movement or

### MEDIA



the outdoors. Some couldn't figure out how to fit all those things into one week... so they took the whole year off of TV! This week reportedly causes sharp downturns in remote control finger dexterity and brain numbing, and dramatic rises in creativity, physical fitness, friendships, and fun!

Don't those stories send shivers of shake-rattle-and-roll excitement tingling up your spine? There are people and organizations all over the world working to take back control of our minds and our culture from the 'brain numbing' advertising media. Independent artists and grassroots circuses are refusing to accept corporate sponsorship and keeping ownership of their art. Whole countries are banning advertising directed at children and in schools. People around the world are tired of corporate media and turning to alternative (non-profit) magazines and radio stations for information. With so many options and resources before us—books, local and international newspapers, the internet, community radio and television, and 'zines—we all have the choice to accept what we're being sold or to stand up, demand better, and play a part in creating the beautiful solutions that ensure our media and culture reflect who we really are. ACTION



### Action Recipe(

### Adbusting Workshop

### Ingredients

- A couple of ads (printed and/or taped TV or radio ads and/or photos of billboards)
- A couple of friends, your family, or a keen class
- Some markers (optional)

- 1 Place people in groups of 3 or 4, each with an ad to analyze.
- 2 Give each group a printed list of discussion questions,
  - potentially including:
  - Who is the targeted audience of this ad? How do I know this?
  - What tricks are they using to make it appeal to the audience?
  - What are the assumptions they are making? Are they accurate?
  - Are they telling the whole story about their product?
  - What other relevant information might they be leaving out?
  - How does this ad make me feel?
  - Whose interests are represented?
  - Do I need what they are trying to sell me?
- **3** Have each group make up a theatrical, mock advertisement for the product that tells its real story.
- 4 Bring the groups back together and enjoy the good times of turning a misleading ad on its head!

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### The "Share Your Wares" Program

#### Ingredients

- A board to post things on
- A sign up sheet and pen
- People with talents or things to give away, loan, or trade
- Email access (not mandatory though)

### Directions

- 1 Put up a sign-up sheet like the one below on a board in your school or classroom (or other central community location). Explain the "share your wares" program and ask people to write down all the things they would like to give, loan, and/or trade. People who need or want those things can contact the giver directly. Hint: it's probably best for you to start off the list to get people's ideas going!
- 2 If you're using email to distribute the information online, ask people to forward the information to others in your general area, and then send out updates of the list of 'who's offering what' once a month. Keep an eye on the paper list that is posted, and post a second page when the first one gets filled.
- 3 Celebrate because you've: helped connect people in your area, shared materials and skills, decreased unnecessary consumption, created alternatives to monetary exchanges, and diverted things away from the landfill!

If you want to go a step further, check the International 'Freecycle' site (www.freecycle.org ) to see if your city already has a free-cycle system—and if not, set one up!

NAME	WARES	GIFT	LOAN	TRADE	PHONE	EMAIL
Shojhanah	Guitar Lessons	*		*	555-6065	stringmaster10@otesha.ca
Ed	Adbusters Magazines	*	*		555-2472	bustads78@funknet.ca
Lorí	Vegan Baking knowledge	*		*	555-95 <del>4</del> 1	crueltyfree@bellybuh.ca
etc						

### One Anything Please... or 'Consumption-free Gifting')

While advertising has convinced most people that to show someone you care, you need to spend money on them, there's a really easy way to give gifts without resorting to consumerism. These coupons are a great way to tap into each other's talents and ideas. Better yet, they offer the perfect excuse to say, "Hey, I miss you—let's hang out!"

### Ingredients

- Paper
- Markers
- Someone to whom you want to give a gift!

### Directions

- 1 Make a funky, decorative 'One Anything Coupon', redeemable anytime, for anything from you that they want:
  - Accompanying them on the bus to the vet to pick up their cat
  - Making a mix CD of your favorite songs
  - Helping with math homework
  - Movie watching night
  - A tin of your famous cookies
  - Trimming their nose hairs\*
  - Trimming their cat's nose hairs on the bus\*\*
- **2** Give the coupon to someone!
- 3 Do what they want you to do!

If you are feeling nervous about letting your friend have free reign over what you do for them, you can always custom design the coupons! ex. "free gourmet dinner at my house"

<sup>\*</sup> If there are limits to what you are willing to do for your friend, you should include a disclaimer on the coupon, like, "Life-threatening or gross activities excepted."

<sup>\*\*</sup> That would just be weird.

MEDIA



Ears, Listening to socially conscious his-hop beats.

Brain: Not numb from TV or injective from adj. Instead, thriving with creative activity!

Eyes: Open wide to see the whole story behind the media message!

> Month. Anestioning media stereotypes Bemessages out loud.

tlands: being creative (painting, writing, drawing, playing wwski).

(lotking, Displaying a positive wessage or simply NO LOGO at all!

**Bum.** Not sore from sitting in front of the TV. tiands, (hecking out alternative magazines Bc zines.

Feet. Walking to the park or youth centre to see friends instead of going shopping at the wall.

### **Go Further!**



**Reading :** Kalle Lasn (1999). Culture Jam: How to Reverse America's Suicidal Consumer Binge—And Why We Must. New York: Quill. Naomi Klein (2000). No Logo: Taking aim at the brand buillies. Toronto: Knopf Canada.

Juliet B. Schor (1998). The Overspent American: Why we want what we don't need. New York: Basic Books.



**Webś(te***f:* Alternet: www.alternet.org Center for a New American Dream: www.newdream.org Common Dreams: www.commondreams.org Independent Media Center: www.indymedia.org

Independent Media TV: www.independent-media.tv Democracy Now: www.democracynow.org



Videof : Mark Achbar, Jennifer Abbott and Joel Bakan (2004). The Corporation. Danny Schechter (2004). Weapons of Mass Deception. Naomi Klein (2003). No Logo.



**Volunteer:** Write an article or make some art for a local 'zine or a progressive magazine like Adbusters (www.adbusters.org) or New Moon (www.newmoon.org)



**Field Trip**: Local newspaper, radio, or TV station. Check out who owns them, who their main advertisers are, and what effect those factors have on their content.

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**Detective Work**. Sniff out corporate sponsorship of your school (start with soft drink machines and uniforms) and, if you uncover any, let your school administrators know what you think about it.

Check out the billboards in and around your town—do you agree with the messages they are promoting? Approach your town or city councilor with your opinions.

Calculate the time you spend watching television in a week, find out the average weekly TV-watching time of the students in class, and challenge each other to reduce that time week by week!



**FUN Time(:** Remove the logos on your clothes (or wear them inside out), and instead add a positive message that represents *your* opinions. Adbust your logos by adding messages to tell the whole story about the products.

Grab a video camera, a tape recorder, or some materials for a poster and create your own media on an issue of your choice! See if the local TV or radio station will play it, or just post it up in your school or neighbourhood!

### Endnotes

- 1 Centre For a New American Dream. *Facts About Marketing to Children*. Retrieved November 30th, 2004, from www.newdream.org/kids/facts.php.
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- 4 Orr, David (1999). 'Verbicide'. Conservation Biology, August. Cited in World Watch Magazine, January/February 2000. Retrieved November 30th, 2004, from www.worldwatch.org/pubs/mag/2000/131/mos/.
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- 7 Footnote on corporate sponsored curriculum from Schlosser, Eric (2002). Fast Food Nation. New York: Harper Collins Publishers Inc. The coal example is a real one (the American Coal Foundation claimed that "the earth could benefit rather than be harmed from increased carbon dioxide") and there are others, includ-

#### **ENDNOTES**

ing Proctor and Gamble teaching that clear-cutting was actually good for the environment, and Exxon Education saying that fossil fuels created few environmental problems and that alternative sources of energy were too expensive.

- 8 Statistics are for the US. Lasn, Kalle (2000). Culture Jam: How to Reverse America's Suicidal Consumer Binge—And Why We Must. New York: Quill.
- 9 Columbia Journalism Review. Who Owns What—The Walt Disney Company. Retrieved Sept 1st, 2004, from www.cjr.org/tools/owners/disney.asp.
- 10 Hong Kong Christian Industrial Committee. *Beware of Mickey: Disney Sweatshops in South China*. Retrieved December 8th, 2004, from www.maquilasolidarity.org /campaigns/disney/report.htm.
- 11 Responsible Shopper. *Profile: General Electric Company*. Retrieved Sept 1st, 2004, from www.responsibleshopper.org/basic.cfm?cusip=369604.
- 12 In Canada, CanWest Global owns 120 community newspapers, 15 major daily newspapers, and sixteen television stations; in December 2001, it ordered all of its newspapers to run the same 'national editorials' three times a week, all carrying strong messages for lower taxes and less regulation of the media. (Moore, Aaron, Columbia Journalism Review. A Chill in Canada. Retrieved Sept 1st, 2004, from www.cjr.org/archives.asp?url=/02/2/moore.asp). In the United States, Time Warner owns AOL, CNN, TBS, HBO, Warner Bros. Studios, Castle Rock Entertainment, Time, Sports Illustrated, People, over 40 other magazines, over 50 record labels, the Cartoon Network and the Atlanta Braves. (Columbia Journalism Review. Who Owns What—Time Warner. Retrieved Sept 1st, 2004, from www.cjr.org/tools/owners/timewarner.asp). Try going an hour on TV or walking downtown without seeing an ad for one of those!
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- 14 Fontanazza, Maria, The Echo. Buy Nothing for a Change. Retrieved Sept 1st, 2004, from http://journalism.smcvt.edu/echo/11.13.02/Buy%20Nothing%20Day.htm.
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- 17 Diabetes New Zealand. Legislative Intervention To Address Obesity In Overseas Jurisdictions. Retrieved November 30th, 2004, from www.scoop.co.nz/mason/ stories/GE0403/S00030.htm.
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# Coffee

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## **Removing** the Blinders



Ah, the coffee drinkers, lined up like school children waiting for their bus, unable to function or face the world until their lips are curled around the cup of sweet java. The smell is smoothly invigorating even if you don't drink the stuff — an unquestioned part of our everyday morning routine. I, **Katherine Ryan**, your well-caffeinated narrator for this chapter, am a ceremonial coffee drinker myself. I sayour it with friends after tasty meals and

keep it with me for companionship and stamina as I work into the wee hours of the morning on that last-minute essay.

Until recently, I hadn't thought about the larger impact that one cup of coffee could have on the world. It turns out my 'cup of joe' is particularly political: with massive social and environmental impacts — from deforestation, to pesticides, to unfair wages and the perpetuation of poverty, to waste at every stage of its production and consumption. Enter *Fact Box!* 

### COFFEE FACT BOX

Since 1997, the prices paid to coffee farmers and producers in developing countries (mostly in Latin America and Africa) have dropped by 80%. Plantations have been forced to fire workers. Small farmers go without food, take their children out of school, and even abandon their farms to live in cities in poverty.<sup>1</sup> To grow more coffee (making the prices go down even further), farmers are encouraged to use 'modern' practices that result in massive deforestation and soil erosion, the loss of biodiversity and habitat, and an increase in chemical pesticide use.

- International Coffee Price (US dollars), 1997: \$3.15
- International Coffee Price (US dollars), January 2003: \$0.54
- Average **monthly income** of a Guatemalan coffee plantation worker: \$166
- Monthly cost for basic food needs for a Guatemalan family of five: \$222
- Monthly cost for basic food, education, healthcare, clothing and transportation needs for a Guatemalan family of five: \$406<sup>2</sup>
- **Price paid** for one pound of coffee to small farmers in Chiapas, Mexico: 20-30 cents
- Production cost for one pound of coffee in Chiapas: 76 cents<sup>3</sup>
- Percentage of Canadians who drink coffee every day: 67 (over **20 million** people)!
- Average cups per day: 3<sup>4</sup>
- Annual Impact on the Earth of one person's consumption of 3 cups of coffee a day: 51 gallons of coffee processed, 18 coffee trees harvested, 16 pounds of fertilizer used, several ounces of pesticides sprayed, and 64 pounds of coffee pulp discarded into the local river<sup>5</sup>



COFFEE

When I started to learn more about the conditions of the people behind the product, I considered giving up coffee. But my inner addict responded: "No! For the love of everything fine and wonderful on this green Earth, no more coffee no es possiblo!" (My inner addict's Spanish is not so hot.) Fortunately, I discovered something that allow-ed me to keep my caffeine fix and change the world in the same sip.

Let me introduce you to...





This mighty crusader wears a cape woven with equality, sustainability, and justice. Fair Trade provides a just, guaranteed price to the farmer for his crop, recognizing the true cost of his materials and labour, and empowering him to break the cycle of poverty.

**Pursues fairness and equality:** Pays a minimum of \$1.26/lb instead of the \$0.30/lb most often paid to farmers.<sup>6</sup> Insists on healthy working conditions and fair wages for plantation workers.

**Approachable:** Often buys coffee directly from the farmers themselves or democratic farmers' co-ops, instead of going through several intermediaries (known as 'covotes') who rip off farmers.

**Dependable:** A long-term relationship is established (minimum 2 harvests), paying farmers 50% of the price before the beans are grown to help with initial inputs, like seeds, tools and materials.

**Protects the vulnerable:** No forced or exploitative child labour—fair price means farmers can send their children to school!

**Culturally sensitive:** Respects and protects the cultural norms and needs of the producers.

Seeks justice for all: Other products with Fair Trade options include: sugar, bananas and other fruit, juices, chocolate, cocoa, tea, flowers, rice, and even soccer balls (all of which are usually produced under exploitative conditions).

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This mysterious master of the deep forest is a friend to all the plants and creatures necessary for a thriving ecosystem. Shade Grown dwells under the existing forest canopy in the traditional practice of growing coffee beans out of the reach of the sun, instead of cutting down rainforest and crops.

**Nurturing:** Provides habitat for hundreds of birds, mammals, and other species, restoring crucial biodiversity.<sup>7</sup>

**Nourishing:** Allows farmers to feed and care for his family with the food (fruit, vegetables, nuts), medicinal crops, and firewood taken from the forest. The farmer may also sell them at the market to supplement their coffee income.

**Enriching:** Provides added nutrients to the soil and prevents soil erosion, increasing the lifespan of plants and long-term sustainability of the land.<sup>8</sup> **Allied with Organic:** Many of the trees provide natural pesticides,

decreasing and almost eliminating the need for chemicals<sup>9</sup> that harm the farmer and the consumer. Shade trees also provide natural mulch, reducing the need for gross chemical fertilizers too!<sup>10</sup>

**Cool:** Combats global warming as the trees remove massive amounts of carbon dioxide from the air, and replace it with clean, sweet oxygen!

### **REMOVING THE BLINDERS**



This all-natural wonder harnesses all the powers of Mother Earth into pure, healthy goodness! Organic uses traditional methods to solve insect, weed, and disease problems by growing coffee without the use of chemical pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, or fertilizers.

**Promotes health:** Prevents insects and disease from destroying crops without poisoning the food, the farmer, or our environment! **Reduces risks:** Bans genetic modification, of which the long-term consequences on human health and the global ecosystem are uncertain and unnecessary.

**Connected:** Understands and restores the complex natural processes and cycles that promote rich, self-replenishing ecosystems.

What an awesome, world-changing Trio! So why are only 1.5% of us buying fair trade coffee?<sup>11</sup>

### **Coffee Myths**

**Myth 1: Fair trade coffee is too expensive and too difficult to find.** Fair trade coffee is often more expensive than low-grade coffee. However, the few extra pennies that may come out of your pocket will likely mean a lot more to the farmer you are supporting than to your lighter wallet. Those extra pennies are the price you pay for fairness—a pretty good deal!



In terms of finding fair trade, right now you can order it online or at select coffee shops, health food stores, and supermarkets. Just look for the fair trade symbol. When it's not there, it's easy to tell your local coffee shop/supermarket owner that you'd like to see it—when enough people ask, it'll show up! When more people insist on a double-double of ethics and fairness, more farmers can sell their crops for a fair price, and we can get more fair trade coffee!

### Myth 2: Starbucks sells fair trade coffee — don't they rock?

We're glad that Starbucks carries a line of FT coffee, and in that domain they are doing better than many coffee houses out there like Second Cup and Tim Horton's. However, FT coffee still makes up a very small percentage of the coffee they sell. They rarely brew it in-store; most of their FT sales are made up of coffee that is 'ground by the pound'. Fair trade is seen as a niche market, reserved for those who care, instead of a fundamental social justice issue. That practice can easily change as more of their customers ask for it (that means all of us!), but until then, they and other large coffee shops will still sell ethics-free coffee and exploit farmers. Meanwhile, there are many smaller shops that sell all fair trade coffee and chocolate, all the time.

### Myth 3: Even if they don't sell fair trade coffee, the big coffee companies do care about the communities from which they buy their coffee. They build health centers and schools in those communities, and/or support other charities.

Some of the big producers pride themselves on 'giving back' to their coffeegrowing communities in the ways mentioned. The trouble is that they are 'giving back' only a very small percentage of the massive profit they made

### **REMOVING THE BLINDERS**



(fockets only contain lint)

by exploiting the market and the farmer to begin with. In May of 2002, the president of the Guatemalan coffee producers' association summed it up: "We thank and appreciate the international community's food aid. We would appreciate it more if they paid us better for our products."<sup>12</sup>

Instead of paying a fair price for the coffee and allowing the farmers and communities to decide how to spend that money, they exploit and profit from the farmer, and then try to appear generous by 'giving' in ways that they—not necessarily the community—determine to be important. Fair trade coffee is not the same as charity; it is about changing the system and recognizing and valuing the farmers, their products, and the planet in an equitable way.

### Myth 4: Coffee farmers are a special case — that kind of exploitation doesn't exist in other industries.

Coffee was chosen as one of the first industries in which fair trade should be introduced because of its popularity (it's the second most common beverage in Canada after water!). However, unfair trade exists in many other industries. One example is the commercial cocoa trade, involving 20 million people.<sup>13</sup> The trading organizations and the chocolate industry receive about 70% of the profit from chocolate, whereas the cocoa farmers (who usually have no alternative source of income) receive barely 5%.<sup>14</sup> In 2001, less than a fraction of 1% of all cocoa produced was sold at fair trade prices.<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, FT chocolate is mmm-mmm good! Some other products that are usually sold under unfair conditions but are starting to offer fair trade alternatives: sugar, tea, bananas, fruits, clothing, handicrafts and flowers!

#### COFFEE

### Myth 5: It's just what's inside the cup that counts.

There's no denying that what's inside the cup is *super* important, but ethics are more than java-deep... The cup itself merits putting ethics into action! Nearly 113 billion cups are used and discarded every year in United States alone!<sup>16</sup> It hardly makes sense to pat ourselves on the back for saving trees by getting shade grown coffee and then put that coffee into a throw-away cup! It's incredibly easy to always carry a re-usable mug around in our backpacks — most places will even give a discount for it (and if they don't, feel free to tell them that they should as your waste-reduction-tactics are saving them money)! So bring on the re-usable mugs — especially ones we can get from the thrift store.

**Learning that the current coffee prices** paid to farmers aren't just 'unfair', but are actually lower than the cost of producing the coffee, makes me realize that I can't support this exploitation.

This isn't just a case of being considerate to our neighbours: it's about how our actions are crippling, even crushing, the economies of numerous developing countries. It's about widespread poverty and social unrest. Farmers are disillusioned, and no longer invest in their crops. The results are far reaching and include children being withdrawn from schools and families being unable to meet their basic needs. In addition, there are the environmental effects of widespread pesticide use, the clear cutting of rainforests for greater crop yields, and those dreadful disposable cups clogging up our landfills.



### Jocelyn Parr

IN THE PAST YEAR, two things happened that opened my eyes in a way that no article could ever do. On May 8, 2003, my partner Santiago left to join the Otesha Project and began the 8,000-kilometre journey across Canada, visiting as many schools, camps, community centres, libraries, etc., as they could along the way. That same day, I left on a trip to Guatemala.

This trip was to be the hardest solo trip I have ever taken, primarily because the volunteer work I did there allowed me entry into a community of women whose lives have been forever changed by their lost love. The women I met on that trip had lost brothers, fathers, sons and lovers—men who were killed or tortured by the government-sanctioned, US-funded military during Guatemala's 36-year civil war, which only ended in 1996. Hardest hit were the indigenous people, the descendants of the Mayan people. But they have demonstrated incredible resilience. They continue to worship on mountaintops, speak one of Guatemala's twenty-one languages, wear the traditional *huipils* that mark their home region, and band together in cooperatives like the one I volunteered at, and the fair trade coffee cooperative I visited. There is reason to hope.

You see, that fair trade cooperative, and many others like it, is helping indigenous farmers re-build their lives after the years of terror. The cooperative and coffee plantation embodied all those things I read about on the wrappers of fair trade products: children were enabled to attend school, farmers were paid a fair wage and were governed by an elected *junta* (or board of directors). In turn, the *junta* advocated for the farmers

### COFFEE

on all kinds of issues ranging from land claims to school locations. The farmers' organic coffee was wonderful, and they graciously offered me a steaming cup of it upon my arrival. When I left, I purchased as many pounds as I could carry and returned to Canada soon after.

Now, at this point in my story, perhaps you are anticipating that I would have committed to only drinking fair trade coffee for the rest of my life. And perhaps you are assuming that it was my first exposure to the idea of fair trade coffee. I know I'd sound like a better person if both of those assumptions were true. But I have to admit that I had learned about the idea of fair trade coffee several years before, and had made a mediocre effort to consume only fair trade coffee. Sure, I could talk about the idea and recite the reasons why it was better. However, as many of us know, it takes a lot more than just knowledge to make individuals change.

I am a stubborn creature. And so, it took my coming home to a newly 'Oteshafied' boyfriend who had just returned from the bike tour, to make any lasting change. And even then it required some... persuasion. I enclose here for you a journal entry that speaks to the way I felt challenged, and even threatened, by the honest truth that my lifestyle was unsustainable:

July 8, 2003

Talking about environmental issues makes me feel paralyzed... I feel discouraged and like everything I am doing is wrong and could never be enough. It feels like I am failing before I begin: Why bother? It's impossible, it's too big! And I'm not like that anyway! I just want to forget about the bigger world and stay in the bubble with my friends.

Well, that embarrassing bout of grumpiness was an important first step in the process of changing (baby-step by baby-step) the way I was living. Looking back, I felt that making changes that seemed so enormous would threaten who I was. I had always been someone who was aware of issues such as these, and I had even made some minor commitments. But the need to make so many new choices all at once was overwhelming and put the stubborn side of me into high gear.

Now, a year later, I do consume only fair trade coffee, and never from a disposable container. And I didn't stop there as I realized how inter-connected all of my actions were: I have a lovely compost for my organic waste, and I diligently separate my papers and plastics. I also flush the

#### MIRROR

toilet less and sneak the occasional rock-filled peanut jar into random toilets. Just recently I bid my car, Suzy, adieu, and I am happier and healthier for it. I will say, however, that one of the interesting things about change is that at first, it seems so uncomfortable, and like it will never fit. But, a year later I realize that these things have become habit. I automatically associate getting a coffee with two things: one, my travel mug and; two, my new and improved map of the city I live in. You see, in *my* visual map of Montreal, the establishments that don't serve fair trade coffee just don't exist, so it's pretty easy to never end up at them! There are so many different paths to change. Sometimes all it takes is a chance experience or encounter. Sometimes it takes the determined insistence (and encouragement) of those closest to us; I have been lucky enough to have both.

Like Jocelyn, when I'm standing in the grocery store aisle, I no longer just look at prices and ingredient listings. I want to know more: where is it from, who made it, was it produced ethically and were the producers fairly compensated? I want to be part of the change Jocelyn witnessed on her trip to that Guatemalan coffee co-operative. This sounds like hard work, but it's immensely satisfying knowing that for every choice I make, I'm voting for the kind of future that I want. I'm just one person in a very long check-out line, but I know that I count!

I've also started buying fair trade gifts for people. The response has been awesome! A lot of people are much the way I was—they don't really know a lot about fair trade. However, I've been amazed at people's openness and I feel like times are ripe for changing!

Fair trade is starting to catch on, and I'm hopeful that it will go from a mere specialty item to the norm. I continue to spread the word as thick as PB&J,<sup>17</sup> and I relish the taste of fair trade coffee on my lips.

### The Tale of Two Beanheads



MIRROR





### A Tale of Two Cities Garstang, England

Though the little farming town of Garstang, population 5,000, is not on the normal tourist tour of the English countryside, there is good reason to believe that Garstang will soon be known the world over. Here's why...

Back in 1992, three of Garstang's citizens were very interested in issues of poverty and inequality, especially in developing nations. They were determined to act towards solutions for the problems they saw, but weren't sure what exactly they could do, since the problems were across continents and oceans in places in Africa or South America. They decided that instead of doing it alone, they would join Oxfam, an organization also interested in poverty alleviation, and they formed the Garstang Oxfam Group (the GOG).

At the time, Oxfam was just starting to work on a cool new project: along with other charities in the UK they formed the Fairtrade Foundation and launched the Fairtrade Mark. As the only independent guarantee of Fairtrade certification, the Fairtrade Mark would bring Fairtrade into the mainstream. After hearing about Fairtrade, the Garstang Oxfam Group (GOG) decided it was pretty awesome, being an action they could take at home in Garstang that would support farmers in far away places. There was only one problem. To promote Fairtrade products in their community, they needed there to be businesses that sold them. But in all of Garstang, the only option for buying Fairtrade coffee was out of a church-run shop, the Mustard Seed, and it was only open two days a week.

#### EMPOWERMENT

So the GOG got to work. With the help of Oxfam, the three started talking up Fairtrade with businesses and customers alike—they held debates, set up street stalls, did surveys, held taste tests... and slowly but surely, things in Garstang started to shift. The GOG grew from three to nineteen members, and many of the townsfolk were starting to demand Fairtrade products in the stores. Finally, a full-time store, The Cooperative Pioneer, took a leap of faith and started to carry a line of Fairtrade products, including coffee, tea, chocolate, and cocoa.

For most, this would have been a victory. The GOG could easily have sat back, put their feet up, and enjoyed a cup of Fairtrade coffee, happy with their accomplishment. but they decided that this was only the beginning. With the help of the high school drama troupe, the Youth Global Issues Club and the Youth Club. the GOG continued their campaign, working even harder than before, making themselves known



to every inhabitant of Garstang.

The results? Today, the Town Council has agreed to support Fairtrade and use the products when possible, 90 of the 100 businesses in Garstang sell or use Fairtrade products, all the schools and churches in Garstang support Fairtrade, and Garstang was declared the world's first Fairtrade Town by the Fairtrade Foundation in the UK. Not only that, but since achieving Fairtrade status, 75 other towns, cities, villages, islands and boroughs have now followed Garstang's example and become Fairtrade Towns. Another 222 places are working towards gaining Fairtrade status including London.

All this to say that because of the hard work and passion of three individuals, Garstang is on the world map, declaring that helping people with what we buy can indeed become the norm, and showing that it takes only a few dedicated people to change the world.

### **Snack Shack Revolution!**

At the Trafalgar School for girls in Montreal, everyone goes to the *Snack Shack* (a treat stand set up and run by the senior students) to pick up a treat—a chocolate bar is one of the favourites. However in 2004, a few inspired students decided to take action and turn their Snack Shack into a place where students can support justice with every tasty bite! After a few conversations with the students who ran the Snack Shack and some advertising, fair trade chocolate bars became available at the Snack Shack. Not only did these students create big change in their school and in the lives of the cocoa farmers they were supporting, but their actions inspired their teachers as well. Shortly afterwards, only fair trade coffee was available in the teachers' staff room. Now that's a revolution!

Area of coffee-producing land that could be converted back to the traditional shade-grown, organic method if only **10% of U.S. coffee drinkers demanded fair trade coffee**:

### 135,000 hectares

(equal to 72,241 football fields).<sup>18</sup>

ACTION



### Action Recipies

### Getting Fair Trade Coffee and Chocolate at Your School (Approach #1)

The 'Suckering 'em in with a Taste of the Goodness' method.

### Ingredients

- Table
- Fair trade pamphlets from Transfair (www.transfair.ca)
- Fair trade coffee and chocolate

- 1 Set up the table in a common area at lunch and distribute pamphlets on fair trade.
- 2 Let everyone see the coffee and chocolate.
- **3** Explain to them the difference between the fair trade products and the regular ones.
- 4 If you have the resources to do so, give some tasty free samples (in their reusable mugs)—otherwise, if you have permission sell 'em right there at the table. After people have tasted the goodness they'll be sure to be back for more!

### Getting Fair Trade Coffee and Chocolate at Your School (Approach #2)

The 'Talking to the Administration' Method

### Ingredients

- Fair trade pamphlets
- A friend or group of friends
- Spirit, smiles, and a voice that feels more and more confident in standing up for justice!

- 1 Do some research ahead to see what coffee is in the school staff room, what kind of chocolate the band or sports teams sell as fundraisers, and what products are in the cafeteria.
- 2 If the results don't meet your dreams, go around school with a petition stating that your school should use/carry fair trade products, getting as many signatures as possible.
- **3** Set up a meeting with the administration of your school.
- **4** Brew a pot of FT coffee and pour coffee into reusable mugs for all attending the meeting.
- 5 Show them the petition and share with them why fair trade is good and how it affects families and young people around the world. They are likely to be concerned with the well-being of the children they are affecting with their morning cup of coffee.
- 6 Propose what fair trade products you would like to have available in the cafeteria and/or staff room and/or school fundraiser, and go from there.

### ACTION

### Getting Business to Jump on the Fair Trade Bandwagon (Approach #1)

The 'Guerrilla Theatre Fun Times' Method

### Ingredients

- Petition
- Good negotiation skills
- Contact information for fair trade suppliers (www.lasiembra.com has a great program for fair trade school fundraising!)
- Fair trade coffee to brew up (optional)

- 1 Go into coffee shops with a group and ask for fair trade coffee (in a funky reusable mug of course).
- 2 If the coffee shop carries fair trade, congratulate them by singing a song or performing a little skit displaying how happy you are that they support coffee farmers.
- 3 If the coffee shop does not carry fair trade, perform a similar skit that encourages other customers and management to start supporting FT. Be positive, friendly and short. If your skit is longer, you will most likely need to do it outside the store on the sidewalk (public property). Make sure everyone knows how passionate you are about fair trade and the positive opportunity they have to support it. By the end of your skit everyone around should be asking themselves why they are not having as much fun as you and your friends.
- **4** If the store has customer reply forms be sure to fill them out, asking for fair trade, organic, shade grown coffee, of course!

### COFFEE

### Getting Business to Jump on the Fair Trade Bandwagon (Approach #2)

The 'Epic Letter Writers Campaign' Method

#### Ingredients

- Paper
- Pens or a printer
- As many people as you can find
- Some muscle rub to get the cramp out of your letter-writing arm!
- Mailing addresses of coffee and chocolate vendors

#### Directions

- 1 Do a little in-person or on-line research into the companies you want to target.
- 2 Write letters to as many companies as possible, telling them that you want them to have fair trade options. You could even crank things up a notch and encourage them to carry **only** fair trade.
- 3 Send 'em off (the letters)!

#### Addresses of Coffee Vendors and Chocolate Manufacturers

Tim Horton's 874 Sinclair Road Oakville, ON L6K 2Y1 Tel: (905) 845-6511 Fax: (905) 845-0265 customer\_service@timhortons. com

#### M&M/MARS

Attention: Consumer Affairs Department 800 High Street Hackettstown, NJ 07840 1-800-627-7852

Starbucks Customer Relations PO Box 3717 Seattle, WA 98124-3717 Second Cup c/o Cara Operations 6303 Airport Rd. Mississauga, ON, L4V 1R8 1-800-338-2610 customersat@secondcup.com

### Fact Box FYI

### The Letter Writing Points System

The more letters that are written, the more that companies will take notice. Corporations are often looking out for their bottom line: profit. If they read a bunch of letters telling them people will not buy their products unless they support fair trade, they will soon realize that their bottom line will be hurt. It's a way to vote with your dollar without spending any money!

When corporations receive mail, they do not treat every letter the same! Many have a points system where they tally letters to determine where consumer viewpoints lie—different letters are given more importance and weight than others. For example, if a letter took a long time to write (hand written, sent by mail), it is worth, for example, 100 points or consumer votes, whereas an on-line petition or email is only worth 10. It is best to write to them in the way that holds the most sway. The hierarchy of points often goes like this: Hand written letter/fax, Typed letter/fax, Email.

Some companies also keep track of in-person requests, so don't undervalue the Guerrilla Theatre approach too!

### COFFEE

SMALL

FFERENCE

the ACTION ADDICT

Eyes: Searching for fair trade, organic & shade grown labels. Head, Dreaming of eating a brownie made with fair trade sugar and chocolate.

> Howth, Talking to store managers about the benefits of fair trade.

Hand, Letters to companies asking them to carry fair trade products.

Hand, Carrying fair trade flowers for that special someone! Backpack, Carrying a renjable uning!

5

Wallet, Rejerved for buying fair trade goods!

Pants, Funky fair trade handicraft dothing.

Feet: Kicking a fair trade soccer ball.

### **Go Further!**



**Reading:** David Ransom (2001). The No-nonsense guide to fair trade. Toronto: New International Publishing. Oxfam's Fair Trade Workshop—Facilitators Guide www.oxfam.ca/campaigns/downloads/Coffeekit2.pdf



**Detective Work**: Look around in your community for places that sell fair trade items, and share them at the back of the book!



**Field trip**. If there are a number of places that sell FT items in your community, gather as many people together as possible and do a 'Fair Trade crawl' (instead of a pub crawl), where on one wonderful evening you travel from coffee shop, to health food store, to a Ten

Thousand Villages store (www.tenthousandvillages.com) to learn about fair trade in your community!



**Fun stuff:** Hold a fair trade soccer tournament with fair trade soccer balls! http://yfocus.ncf.ca/fairtrade/

### Endnotes

1 1962: The International Coffee Agreement (ICA) is signed. To keep prices stable and fair for farmers and consumers, the amount of coffee grown and processed is agreed to and controlled by each country. Coffee companies have to buy coffee from the producing countries' 'marketing board' (a government organization that buys the coffee from farmers and sells it for them at a stable price).

**1989:** The ICA ends. Countries stop cooperating to control the overall amount of coffee grown, and start competing with each other to grow more and more coffee. Basic economics says that when there is a lot more coffee, the price a farmer gets for their coffee goes way down.

**1990s:** Countries stop using 'marketing boards' to buy coffee from farmers and sell it collectively. Farmers are left on their own to sell their coffee to coffee companies. Five major companies (Proctor & Gamble, Phillip Morris, Sara Lee, Nestle, and Tchibo) buy up small companies and control 69% of the world's coffee market, and take advantage of the new lack of collective national 'marketing boards', and

#### COFFEE

exploit the competition between countries and individual farmers to buy coffee at desperately low prices. Their profits continue to go way up, while coffee farmers and workers fall deeper into poverty.

**2000s:** Families abandon their farms, sell off their livestock and other farm assets, go without food, take their children out of school, and often eventually migrate north through the treacherous desert with hope of a job in the United States or Canada. Whole countries experience devastating population drain and poverty in rural areas, overcrowded cities, increased unemployment and crime, crippling reductions in their tax base, and a critical inability to pay foreign debts. Coffee timeline by Ponte, Stefano (2001). *The 'Latte Revolution'? Winners and Losers* 

in the Restructuring of the Global Coffee Marketing Chain. Copenhagen: Centre for Development Research. Retrieved December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2004, from www.agribusinessaccountability.org/pdfs/278\_The Latte Revolution.pdf; and Charveriat, Celine. Bitter Coffee: How the Poor are Paying for the Slump in Coffee Prices. Retrieved December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2004, from www.maketradefair.com/assets/english/

BitterCoffee.pdf

- 2 In Canadian dollars. Global Exchange. Frequently Asked Questions About Fair Trade Coffee. Retrieved December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2004, from www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/ fairtrade/coffee/faq.html.
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- 4 Bridgehead. Did You Know? Retrieved December 12th, 2004, from www.bridgehead.ca.
- 5 Ryan, John and Allan Thein (1997). *Stuff: The Secret Lives of Everyday Things* (New Report, No 4). Northwest Environment.
- 6 Some sources cite prices as low as \$0.15 (Global Exchange. Fair Trade Coffee Campaign. Retrieved December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2004, from www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/ fairtrade/coffee/CoffeeActionPack.pdf). Others cite around \$0.30 (Organic Consumers Association. Life of a Coffee Farmer in Chaipas. Retrieved December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2004, from www.organicconsumers.org/starbucks/fairtrade2.htm.)
- 7 Seattle Audubon Society. Frequently Asked Questions. Retrieved December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004, from www.seattleaudubon.org/shadecoffee/business/faq.html.
- 8 Seattle Audubon Society. Frequently Asked Questions.
- 9 Seattle Audubon Society. Frequently Asked Questions.
- 10 Seattle Audubon Society. Frequently Asked Questions.
- 11 12 billion pounds of coffee are consumed worldwide each year (Lisa Trei. 'Socially conscious beans offer glimmer of hope in global coffee glut, experts say'. Stanford Report. Retrieved December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2004, from http://news-service.stanford. edu/news/2002/april24/coffee-424.html). 170 million pounds of coffee are sold through the Fair Trade network (Organic Consumers Association. *Starbucks Campaign*. Retrieved December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2004, from www.organicconsumers.org/starbucks/)
- 12 Central America and Mexico Report. Fair trade solutions—a panacea? Retrieved December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2004, from www.rtfcam.org/report/volume\_22/No\_4/article\_7.htm.
- 13 For a Change. *Fair Trade Makes Good*. Retrieved December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2004, from www.forachange.co.uk/index.php?subjid=42&stoid=314.
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- 15 La Siembra Cooperative. *Fair Trade Certified*. Retrieved December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2004, from www.lasiembra.com/label.htm
- 16 UNESCO UNEP (2002). Youth X-Change Training Kit on Responsible Consumption. United Nations Publications.
- 17 Peanut Butter and Jam. I like mine very thickly spread.
- 18 The Songbird Foundation. Why Coffee? Retrieved December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2004, from www. songbird.org/coffee/coffee\_index.htm.
# Food

un n

# Removing the Blinders



I have a confession to make. This afternoon, as I stood staring into the open fridge, attempting to choose between the gazillion options for lunch, I had a craving for steak. Yes, that's right, there I was, Alex Way, your happily vegetarian narrator for this chapter —lookin' for a thick, juicy slab of cow...

That's the thing about food and our decisions about what we eat: though it's probably our most direct connection to Mother Nature, it's

also one of the hardest habits to change. Cravings, midnight snack binges, those tantalizing smells that waft from restaurant windows—eating is so very primal, and primary, to our survival—not to mention that here in Canada many of our livelihoods are dependent upon farming.

What we put in our mouths shapes us *and* the world around us. Our food is more than meets the tongue! There are so many issues related to that steak I was craving, and the rest of the food in the fridge, that it's hard to know where to begin.

Let's start with the basics: a crash course in the differences between the mainstream, industrial farm and the organic one. Might seem pretty simple—they're both just growing plants—so what's the biggie about *how* those plants are grown? Well, check this out:

#### **REMOVING THE BLINDERS**





Farm

Factory

## Small-Scale Organic Farms (only 1% of Canadian farms!)<sup>1</sup>

- Are often smaller than 200 acres
- Use only natural pest reducers (bugs, human weeding) and natural fertilizers (compost, manure, nutrient giving crops)
- Use polyculture (many kinds of plants on the field) and crop rotation to keep the soil healthy
- Use mainly human labour
- Don't use Genetically Modified Organisms\*

## Large-scale Industrial Farms

- Are often larger than 6000 acres
- Use chemical pesticides and fertilizers
- Mostly use monoculture (only one kind of plant on the field)
- Use lots of machines and fossil fuels
- May use Genetically Modified Organisms\*

<sup>\*</sup>GMOs are plants that have had their genetic material (DNA) altered—often by putting in genes from another species (ex. fish into tomatoes). This is usually to make them bigger, more flavourful, more colourful, or (theoretically) more drought/pest resistant. The long-term impacts of genetic modification are unknown, and are subject to much debate and controversy. GMOs are also known as 'FrankenFoods', named after the monster made out of parts from different humans.

Here's our good friend Fact Box with some more for y'all to chew on!

# FOOD FACT BOX

- In North America, **53** different carcinogenic (cancer causing) pesticides are applied in great quantities to our food,<sup>2</sup> and pesticide use is actually increasing! The more farmers use pesticides, the more the 'pests' develop immunities to the pesticides, and then the farmers have to apply even more pesticides, over and over! It makes as much sense as trying to fill a bottomless bucket and wondering why our feet are wet. The United States now uses **33** times as much pesticide as it did 20 years ago, but they are still losing the same amount of crops to pests.<sup>3</sup>
- Industrial agriculture uses oil to pump water and run machines, as well as oil-based pesticides and fertilizers. If you add up all that oil use, it comes out to 1600 litres (enough to fill up your car's gas tank 15 times!) of oil per year to feed each American (and that doesn't include transportation to the store)!<sup>4</sup>
- Meat consumption per year of the average person: Nigeria 6 kg.
- Meat consumption per year of the average person: China 23 kg.  $^{\scriptscriptstyle 5}$
- Maximum meat consumption per year recommended by the World Cancer Research Fund: 30 kg.
- Meat consumption per year of the average **Canadian**: 101 kg.<sup>6</sup>
- Proportion of the world's total grain harvest that is fed to livestock: 1/3.<sup>7</sup> (Counting the land used to grow these grains, and the land for grazing, meat production is the world's largest user of land!<sup>8</sup>)
- Every time a single North American becomes vegetarian, 1 acre of trees and 4.4 million litres of water are saved per year, and the amount of water indirectly polluted by that individual is cut in half!<sup>9</sup>

You know the phrase, 'You are what you eat'? Well, a good friend of mine once said, "If we are what we eat, then we are in serious trouble." Those not so tasty facts certainly helped to explain why! Somehow, it seems as though we're turning our food into something that is harming our planet and its people. Totally unreal, or is it?

# **Food Myths**

# Myth 1: The food we eat comes from the happy ol' farmer down the road.

The average distance traveled by the food on our plates (from field to table) is 2,000 km.<sup>10</sup> Holy not-so-local macaroni! That's not cool! Why? Because some serious greenhouse gases get pumped out along those 2,000 km, contributing to global warming!



# Myth 2: We need big, technological, industrial farms so we can feed the starving people and stop world hunger.

Here's the low-down, hoe-down, 'give it to me straight' down: World hunger is not created by a lack of food. Instead, it's caused by landlessness, poverty, and ineffective distribution of food. In the United States, the world's biggest **exporter** of food to other countries, **33 million** people go hungry every year. At the same time, nearly **100 billion pounds** (45 billion kg) of fresh vegetables, fruits, milk, and grain products are wasted by retailers, restaurants, and consumers.<sup>11</sup> In fact, there is enough food out there for each and every person to have two and a half pounds of grain, beans, and nuts, a pound of fruits and vegetables, and nearly a pound of meat, milk, and eggs, every day!<sup>12</sup> It just isn't being equitably distributed.

It could even be said that our modern food system actually causes hunger, by using land in economically developing countries to grow 'cash crops' (intended to be sold to people like us in developed countries, not eaten by the farmer) like coffee, sugar, chocolate and cotton. While the plots of land owned by massive agribusiness corporations to grow cash crops are growing in size, the plots owned by small farmers are shrinking—leaving little to no space for local people in developing countries to farm food for themselves!<sup>13</sup>

### Myth 3: Industrial Farming is more efficient than organic farming.

You've had the low-down, now it's time for the down-low.<sup>14</sup> Many studies have shown that well-managed, small farms using sustainable farming methods produce **more food per acre** of land than the large, industrial farms. One reason is that organic farmers fill their fields with several different crops and either weed them by hand or enlist the services of other critters to help them out using **integrated pest management**.\* The big farms don't like paying folks to weed their industrial gardens, so they use pesticides instead. The problem is that these pesticides often work only for one particular crop, and so industrial farms can only have one crop in a field, and lots of space is wasted in between the rows. On top of this, industrial agriculture destroys the soil over time, so less is produced in the long term. Organic farming can actually **enrich** the soil, which means that food can be grown on that land for much longer!<sup>15</sup>

#### Myth 4: The majority of farm animals live comfortable lives

We've all seen the singing cows on barbecue sauce ads, but have you ever actually seen a **real** cow sing about how happy she is? How many pigs do jigs of joy in the field? How often have you received a high five from a chicken? Although chickens have neither five toes nor the physical capacity to give high fives (cows have delightful singing voices, and pigs have more dance rhythm than most mammals), the majority of farm animals are just not happy most of the time.

\*Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a creative approach to pest and disease control that uses chemical control measures only as last resort. IPM examples include planting marigolds next to tomatoes to draw pests away from the tomatoes, or having dragonflies to eat mosquitoes and other flying insects.



The **majority** of farm animals are raised in large-scale, industrial farms (commonly called **'factory farms'**). Here cows, pigs, chickens, rabbits, and turkeys are confined in small cages or stalls. The size of the stall is no accident. In addition to 'space efficiency', the animals don't exercise (developed muscles make tough meat) and devote all their energy to making meat, eggs, or milk. In addition, to serve the bizarre human taste for drinking another species' milk, dairy cows are artificially impregnated every year, their baby calves taken away immediately after birth to become 'veal'.<sup>16</sup>

Because animals stuck in such confined spaces tend to get cranky and start fighting amongst themselves, measures must be taken to reduce the damage done to their meat (yeah, not for the well being of the animal, but of the 'product' they happen to have around their bones). Chickens have the tips of their beaks cut off, and piglets have their tails 'clipped' (cut off), all without painkillers. Many never see the light of day, spending their lives standing on one patch of concrete inside a huge steel building.<sup>17</sup>

There is no comfort at the factory farm.

# Myth 5: Animal rights issues are the only reason people stop consuming meat.

For many, preventing cruelty to animals is reason enough to eat less meat, eat **free-range/free-run**, **organic**, or **humane certified meat**, or become **vegetarian** or **vegan**. However, it's certainly not the only reason why people stop consuming meat! Meat uses more resources and produces more waste than does the production of plant foods. Check this out, using beef as an example:

To produce 1kg of beef:\*

- 22,000 litres of water are used, depleting our fresh water sources
- 10 kg of grain are fed to the cow food that people could have eaten.
- 40 kg of manure are produced, polluting our waterways and creating greenhouse gases.<sup>18</sup>

Holy... well... holy cow!

Furthermore, the less land we use to feed ourselves, the more we leave for the 30 million other species that we share this planet with, many of which help to provide us with clean air and fresh water—you know, all the good stuff. And what does meat have to do with land? Well, as the saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words, <sup>19</sup> so take a look:



\* If this beef is factory farmed, this one kg also involves antibiotics and hormones given to the cow, pesticides in the cow's food, and horrible living conditions for the cow.

# FACTORY FARM ALTERNATIVES

'Free Range' or 'Free Run' meat: the animal was not caged, and was permitted to roam about either outdoors (free range) or inside a barn (free run—in the case of chickens/turkeys). Legal definitions or standards for 'free range' and 'free run' do not currently exist in Canada.

**Certified Organic meat:** the animal was raised according to organic standards (fed no pesticide-treated or GM grains, nor animal feed of any kind, and was given no hormones or antibiotics) and was verified by an independent inspector.

**Humane Certified meat:** the animal was raised according to the standards of a Humane Society or SPCA, and verified by an independent inspector. In Canada, 'Winnipeg Humane Society Certified' and 'BC SPCA Certified' are two existing certifications.

**Vegetarian:** a diet that does not include any meat (including fish).

**Vegan:** a diet that does not include any meat, milk products, eggs, or animal by-product.



## Myth 6: We need meat to survive, or at least to be healthy, right?

Here again we go, with the good ol' down-low! Globally, the majority of people live on a plant-based diet—the meat and cheese-heavy diet of the typical North American is actually more of a wacky nutritional experiment than vegetarianism ever was! Research is showing that it's the vegetarians who are living longer lives (often 5-15 years longer than the meat eaters,<sup>20</sup> with a 24% reduction in mortality from heart disease)!<sup>21</sup> If you want to become vegetarian, rest assured that every essential vitamin and nutrient you need can be found in vegetarian foods (particularly in legumes, tofu, fortified soy milk, nuts, nutritional yeast and seeds).



# Myth 7: It doesn't make a difference whether you toss the apple core in the compost or the garbage.

Food packaging and waste (from fast food joints and grocery stores especially) are adding up in our landfills! In one year, each Canadian throws out an average of 1,307 pounds of garbage, and for every pound of garbage we throw out, the manufacturers of our goods (factories, farms, etc.) throw out five pounds! North America's consumers and manufacturers combined produce 50% of the world's waste.<sup>22</sup> Yeah, that's half of all the waste in the world, made by 5.2% of the people!<sup>23</sup>

In addition to costing lots of money, taking up land space, creating air pollution, and contaminating water supplies, our ever-growing landfills are a problem because as the garbage decomposes in an anaerobic (oxygenfree) environment, it produces methane. Methane is 21 times more potent of a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide, and currently Canadian landfills produce the greenhouse equivalent of 5 million cars!<sup>24</sup>

# In Canada, 1/3 of the stuff that goes into our landfills is organic matter that could have been composted.<sup>25</sup>

Composting that apple core instead of trashing it means that those nasty landfill effects are avoided, and the awesome soil that is produced contains valuable nutrients for our gardens! Halifax's municipal compost program reduces annual methane emissions by more than 500,000 tons—quite the boast, for a compost! The Otesha office has a 'vermi-composter' (cute little worms that eat our food scraps), and on tour we compost too, so feel free to write with any questions or see www.mastercomposter.org.

Wow, those myths have been busted! Check out this nifty ecological footprint reference chart too. 'Ecological Footprint' refers to how much land (in this chart, how many square metres) is used to produce each one of those items. It includes the land required to grow the food and to absorb the wastes associated with its production. It's a great way to compare different lunches and to see the different size footprints each one leaves on the Earth. Whatever you're eating, it is incredibly important to eat enough! If we want to make positive changes in our lives and the world around us, we have to take care of ourselves. We have to feed ourselves lots of healthy food so that we have the energy to bike to the second-hand clothing store (or across the country)! In short, skipping lunch—while it may reduce your eco-footprint—won't help anyone in the end. Choosing organic, local, vegetarian options sure makes a difference though—check it out!

# ECO-FOOTPRINT OF A LUNCH26

Burgers (one 250 g burger per week)	
Grain-fed Beef Burger	3,598 m²
Pasture-fed (free-range) Beef Burger	2,829 m²
Chicken Burger	716 m²
Tofu Burger	177 m²
Vegetables (1/2 kg per week)	
From the Supermarket	152 m²
Local	128 m²
Local and organic (mechanized)	104 m²
Home grown	64 m²

FOOD



The way that we grow and produce our food seems like a potentially ugly situation — this 'Fatal Harvest' could destroy our waterways, oceans, forests, health, and communities! And yet we barely ever talk about it, or think about the life of our food (and its impacts!) outside of its route from the grocery store to our mouths. If we're going to build healthy connections between people and the planet, we have got to start looking at our dinner plate in a completely different way.



## Ed Gillis

I CAN STILL RECALL those carefree high school evenings when my friends and I would cruise the town—shooting hoops, going to the movies, wandering aimlessly—and wrap up at the McDonald's drive-thru. I was renowned for eating other people's fries first and then delving into my two Big Macs—I can still taste the secret sauce that kept me craving more.

I can still recall telling my girlfriend that her 'nature burgers' tasted like wood, and mocking her bland salads and pale tofu. I can still recall her telling me about factory farms and slaughterhouses, the torturous debeaking of baby chickens and the brutal confinement of veal calves to keep their muscles from developing in order to keep the meat tender. I agreed that such cruelty was wrong, and I offered to eat 'free-range' burgers when the cafeteria started selling them. She smoked, and I ate animals —we're all allowed one vice, right? Besides, how do you have chicken wing contests without the chicken wings?

Then we broke up, and a funny thing happened: she gave me a book. I don't know why I read it, but I did. It said all the same things she had been saying: that North America's meat consumption is intolerably cruel to animals, to our environment, to our own bodies, and to the world's poor. Because we eat so much meat, cows, pigs and chickens are slaughtered *en masse* and often dismembered before they are even killed. Because there is so much livestock, their manure piles up and eventually seeps into our water system. Because the animals are so tightly packed in their stalls that they get sick and diseased, they are pumped full of antibiotics that make their way into my body and destroy my immune system. Because it takes tons of grain to feed a pig or cow, my obsession with meat deprives hundreds of millions of other species of a place to

live, because the land—their home—is taken over by agriculture. I grew more and more appalled with everything I was reading—and I recalled being told in grade school that we had to eat 2-3 servings of meat a day! And those 2-3 servings a day over 21 years = a lot of animal cruelty. I finally realized that my 'vice' was having negative impacts that I wasn't comfortable with. I knew that the only way to change things was with my mouth—eating, that is!

I walked into a sub shop one day that summer and spontaneously ordered a sub without my usual strips of cold-cut pig. To my delight, it tasted virtually the same—you know, olives and mushrooms are pretty good! Next, I tried pizza without pepperoni—same thing! Veggie street vendor dogs, nature burgers, soy milk, TVP (a wicked replacement for ground beef in spaghetti sauce), and mmmmm sautéed tofu—all the same tastes and textures without all the negative effects I'd just read about!

Then I discovered the wonders of broccoli, spinach, and almonds; Thai food, Vietnamese and Mexican; and now... organic, vegan, local, fair trade chocolate hemp ice cream! It tastes so good and no lives were lost for my culinary satisfaction!

I haven't gone on a Big Mac binge in seven years (turns out the 'secret sauce' is just mayo with bits of pickle, easily homemade with tofu, cucumber and a blender). I can make vegan dishes from scratch that make even my most meat-lovin' friends ask for the recipe; and I've discovered we aren't each allowed one vice—we choose our vices. Everyday I choose better taste, a healthier body, a cleaner environment, and a life of becoming friends with the animals I meet instead of eating them.

**Ed makes some awesome** points. How cool is it to enjoy and be conscious of our food, and not just wolf it down in between this meeting and that class? As well, preparing our own food—what a sweet treat! With a solid connection between our actions and their impacts, it feels good to be eating veggie. Mmmm... taste those ethics!



I must say, things are starting to look up. Ed and I, we're making a difference with everyday actions. Replacing even one imported/ chemically-treated/meat-based meal a week with a locally-grown/ organic/vegetarian option will benefit the planet, the animals, and ourselves—right on! Turns out we could fill this whole book with awesome stories about other fantastic food fanatics. But to save paper, we'll provide three. Kicking things off, here's Brook sharing why she feels July 18<sup>th</sup> is a tater-ific day.

# **Potato Plant Day**

July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2004. For some, the day after July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2004. For me, the day which will forever be known as 'Potato Plant Day'.

That was the day I got to tag along with Jen McMullan on her rounds of the gardens she helped set up through the Home Grown Project run by Lifecycles Project Society (www.lifecyclesproject.ca) in Victoria, BC. The project provides aboriginal people living on the Pauquachin and Tsartlip reserves with gardening materials, plants, and instruction so that they can grow their own food. When I first heard about this project, I was impressed and intrigued. From my perspective, it sounded like one of those rare, wonderful projects that actually respond to people's needs instead of telling them what they need. I also liked the fact that the project addresses the 'Big Three': social, economic and environmental issues, that is! My excitement, however, grew like Jack's beanstalk when I actually got to see the project in action.

Of all the people I met on my rounds with Jen that day, Julianna Sampson\* was the one who touched me most. Julianna was eight years old, and had just moved to the Tsartlip reserve. Before moving to the reserve, she had always lived in apartment buildings. As a result, she had never had a chance to have a garden. Julianna, however, was absolutely in love with plants. In fact, she spent every penny of her allowance on flowers. And after she and her sister moved to the reserve, Julianna made it a daily ritual to ask her grandparents if they could plant a garden together. On account of their health, her grandparents always had to say no. That is, until they found out about the Home Grown Project. With the project's help, the Sampsons were able to put in a garden this spring.

Naturally, Julianna was pretty psyched about this, and very psyched about Jen's visits. So when Jen and I pulled into the Sampsons' driveway, Julianna was waiting for us, beaming from ear to ear and itching to show us her garden. With great pride, she towed us towards her garden, pointing out each plant and cooing over how much they had grown. Julianna spent the next hour with us in the garden, watching intently as Jen showed her how to sucker tomato plants and mulch her garden. As I watched Julianna and Jen working together, a wonderful feeling spread through me. I knew I was witnessing change—change that comes in bits

<sup>\*</sup>names have been changed

### EMPOWERMENT

and pieces, and ultimately results in something beautiful. I also began to appreciate the huge number of people affected by this project. That is when I grew to see this day as 'Potato Plant Day'.

A potato plant, as you may know, has two parts: the leafy above ground part, and a mound of potatoes below. The leaves are the food source for the mound of potatoes. The potatoes sprout from the same potato seed, and are intimately connected to each other throughout the growing period.

The Home Grown Project is similar. The leafy above-ground part of the project is helping people become self-sufficient. This year, the project enabled 13 families on the Pauquachin and Tsartlip reserves to grow their own food. That process of achieving self sufficiency (the ability of these families to provide for themselves) provides the 'nourishment' for each of the 'potatoes' in the Home Ground mound, and the potatoes are numerous.

There's Jen, who is empowered daily by the opportunity to apply her knowledge and skills towards a goal she believes in deeply. She's also getting the chance to help build cross-cultural understanding and learning through her daily interactions with the participants in the Home Grown project. There are also the participants-that is, the people who started up their own gardens through Home Grown. Growing the food that ends up on your table is incredibly empowering. It also has tangible, physical benefits. Gardening makes healthy food affordable. Many people on reserves live in



poverty, and growing their own food helps put healthy, abundant food on their tables. In turn, this can help alleviate many of the health problems linked to malnutrition.

Other potatoes in the mound include people who aren't officially participating in the Home Grown Project, but are powerfully impacted by the project and the example it provides. The Sampsons' neighbor, for example, took Jen aside and peppered her with questions about where to get wood to build the gardens, where to get seedlings, and what would grow best in her yard. She decided she wants to plant a garden next year, but she's going to do it on her own!

Then there I was—reminded of the incredible importance of food, and of how central it is to all dimensions of our health. I've been inspired by the participants' desire to learn how to garden, by the work they put into their gardens, and by their incredible commitment to feeding their families. And above all, I am awed and amazed by the capacity of human beings to work towards creating positive social change.

All these potatoes from one leafy plant: sign me up to hoe the line!

**I'm with ya, Brook!** Getting down and dirty, growing food for yourself or for your community is a great way to connect with how food gets to our mouths. Not to mention the fact that it completely avoids the pollution normally generated in transporting and processing food! Helping others to do the same, now that is sweet stuff.

Next up, some folks whose method of travel I must say is close to my heart. And so is their message.

# Deconstructing Dinner Caravan

On July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2003, 17 youth from Canada set off on a 3,000-km bicycle journey from Vancouver to Mexico for a big meeting of the World Trade Organization. Organized by the Sierra Youth Coalition (*www.syc-cjs.org*), the *Deconstructing Dinner Caravan* used their organic pedal power to travel down the West Coast leading workshops and engaging with community groups in rural towns and urban centres. They met with farmers, migrant workers, produce shoppers, and others to highlight the effects of World Trade Organization agriculture policies on the food we consume.



They brought the stories of the people they met all the way to the WTO meeting in Cancun, speaking out about international agribusiness that they believe is environmentally destructive, energy intensive, and subjects migrant workers to unfair labour conditions.<sup>27</sup>

These awesome people from the Caravan help illustrate that food is not only a personal decision, but also the decision of our governments and global organizations. Influencing them can have an amazing impact on what we see on the shelves of our local supermarket. And, last but not least, here's a tale of a crew of passionate youth pushing fast food restaurants to keep our landfills small!

# Waste-Free Fast Food Meal

For three years in a row, Tom Birkender's grade eight students at Summerland High School in BC went on a very special field trip. Instead of heading to the zoo or a landfill site, Tom's students would head to the fast food joint. Yep, that's right, and they even get to call it a school project! You see, when Tom's students started asking about the impacts of fast food, he issued the challenge of producing a garbageless lunch at the restaurant. Reusable containers and bottles in hand, the whole class would trek down to the restaurant. While they were nervous at first, the students were able to explain their goal to the restaurant workers, and they would even go into the kitchen to ensure it was done right. After getting their waste-free meal they would check out how much garbage all the other customers produce. What a shock to see the difference in waste! Everyone was always amazed at how much of a difference was made by simply bringing reusable containers and bottles!

You know, I have this feeling that there is a magnet hidden in the refrigerator that is specially designed for me. I open the door, and am paralyzed in place, unable to make a quick decision on what to eat. I now know for sure that it won't be steak for lunch, but there are so many factors to weigh out. Images of climate change, factory farms, erosion, pesticides, and hunger all pass through my head. Each item of food has its own array of impacts, and as I choose the jar of organic peanut butter and make myself a sandwich, I feel good having taken the time to consider the positive impacts I can have with every snack I eat. And I know I can always come back for the crispy local apple if I'm still hungry.

ACTION



# Action Recipes

# **Grocery Guerrilla Theatre**

## Ingredients

- 2-3 cool friends (or one brave soul)
- 1 grocery store

### Directions

- 1 While standing in front of apples from South Africa, for example, speak really loudly to yourself, to one of your friends, or a stranger, asking why the apples needed to come all the way from South Africa, wondering how many CO2 emissions had been emitted in transportation, and wondering what kind of conditions the apples were picked under.
- 2 Have a friend stand in front of, or point to, the local organic apples (or the next best option), and make a statement about how you are so glad that these apples aren't drenched in poisonous chemicals/aren't genetically modified/haven't traveled as far to get to the store. Make a big deal about how happy you are to make a choice that you feel is good for the earth and its inhabitants.
- 3 Feel free to repeat something similar in front of other grocery store choices you see. Be sure to keep a positive attitude so people won't be scared away by what you are doing, but rather interested in listening to you. Encourage shoppers to make better choices rather than just list negative impacts, and be courteous and respectful to all, including store managers.

### FOOD

# **Operation Food Rescue**

### Ingredients

- Local bakery or grocery store
- Some form of transportation that can carry lots of food (i.e. bike cart, many friends on bikes, wagon, etc.)
- A place where hungry people come to eat, or a location to bring people together to come and eat

### Directions

- 1 Go to the local bakery/grocery store and ask to speak to the manager.
- 2 Introduce yourself and your intentions of trying to redirect unwanted food from the landfill to people who need it.
- 3 Ask them what they currently do with their day old bread / unsellable produce.
- **4** If the food is bound for the landfill, then volunteer to come and pick up the food at closing on whatever day they choose and bring it to either a soup kitchen, food bank, or homeless shelter.
- 5 Contact the nearest shelter to make drop-off arrangements for the food.

Note: You can also check to see if there is a local 'Food Not Bombs' group (www.foodnotbombs.net/canada.html), or a similar organization in your community who is already serving rescued food, and if there isn't one, considering starting one yourself!

\_\_\_\_\_

# **Info Bake Sale**

They say that the best way to a person's heart is through their stomach. Appealing to people's tummies is a great way to get to their brains too! This activity lures people in with baked goods, uses the opportunity to educate them, and demonstrates how great vegan, vegetarian, organic, or local food can really taste!

## Ingredients

- A venue and a spot with a table to 'sell' your wares—you might consider local fairs, your school, university campuses, even your own front lawn! Wherever you set up, make sure it's at a time when there will be enough people walking by to make your effort worthwhile.
- Sample baked goods or finger-foods that highlight the tasty possibilities of using entirely local, organic, vegetarian, and/or vegan ingredients.
- Access to free ingredients, or money to buy them. You may be able to get funding from student clubs.
- A one-minute script of the reasons why you are advocating for that particular kind of food. It doesn't have to be memorized, as long as you remember the main points.

## Directions

- 1 Choose the location, date, and time.
- 2 Find out if you need to get approval or fill out any applications to set up your bake sale in that space.
- 3 Get others to help you out. Three or four people could host the bake sale, which will allow you to talk to more people at once.
- 4 Set up your goodies, and make a sign that attracts people's attention.
- 5 When a prospective 'customer' asks how much the items cost, say that you are charging no money, only a minute of their time.
- 6 If they agree to 'buy' an item, then explain to them why you think it is so important that we begin eating more vegetarian, vegan, local, or organic food. Usually they will want to ask you questions, giving you even more than a minute to do your work! Keep it simple and honest. You don't have to be an expert on every single dimension of the issue!

# Vegan Chocolate Cake

This cake is a beautiful thing—every bit as tasty as any non-vegan chocolate cake could be. It is also extremely easy to make.

## Ingredients

- 2 cups sugar\*
- 3/4 c. cocoa powder\*
- 1 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- Equivalent of 2 eggs \*\*\*
- 1/2 c. vegetable oil \*\*
- 1 c. boiling water

## Steps

- 1 Heat oven to 350 degrees. Grease and flour two 9-inch round baking pans or one  $9 \ge 13$  square baking pan.
- 2 Combine all dry ingredients in a large bowl.
- 3 Add egg substitute, soy milk, oil and vanilla. Whisk until well combined.
- 4 Stir in boiling water (batter will be thin).
- 5 Pour into pans and bake for 30-35 minutes (round pans) and 35 to 40 minutes for a square pan.

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- \* Organic and fair trade options sold by Cocoa Camino—www.lasiembra.com —or health food stores
- \*\* Organic options available at almost all health food stores, and some grocery stores
- \*\*\* 2 eggs = 1 mashed banana OR  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup applesauce OR 1 tbsp ground flax seeds mixed with 3 tbsp water

• 1 3/4 c. flour\*\*

• 1 c. soy milk \*\*

• 1 tsp. Salt

• 1 1/2 tsp. baking powder

• 2 tsp. vanilla extract

## ACTION



# **Go Further**



**Reading:** Frances Moore Lappe *et al* (1998). World Hunger: Twelve Myths.New York: Grove Press Eric Schlosser (2002). Fast Food Nation. New York: Harper Collins Publishers Inc.

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**Detective Work:** Go through your fridge or school cafeteria, and chart where all the food comes from. Look for places where you can buy fair trade, local, organic, low packaged items in your community, as well

as farmer's markets, organic delivery services, or organic food co-ops and share them at the back of this book!



Volunteering:

On Halloween, organize a Halloween for Hunger food drive by all getting dressed up in wicked (second hand!) costumes and going door to door to collect canned food for the local food bank (p.s. saying "Trick or Eat!" at the door always gets a good laugh.)



**Field Trip:** Go to www.wwoof.org and look for an organic farm near you where you can go and volunteer and learn about farming techniques. Buy a packet of organic seeds, or a small plant, and plant it—anywhere! Be sure to water it and check on

## ACTION

it regularly! No available fertile ground near you? No worries! Try some creative dirt holders like filling an old tire or ice cream tub with dirt and planting something inside!



**Letters**: What are *your* views on food issues like animal cruelty, pesticides, protecting farmland, and the availability of organic local food options? Make your voice heard! See the Water Chapter for info on whom to write to in government!

## Endnotes

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# Transport



#### TRANSPORT

# Removing the Blinders



I've had a number of jobs over the years, but ask me to name my favourite and I don't have to think twice: the year I, Omar Bhimji, your narrator for this chapter, spent working as a bike courier in Montreal. Ten hours a day, in sun, rain or snow (and there was a lot of snow), I was in the saddle and out on the street—dodging cars, hopping curbs and having a blast. My bike was my livelihood, my a-to-b and my steadfast friend. Thinking back on that year, I

can hardly remember the falls, the frozen fingers or the flat tires. What I do remember is the absolute freedom my bike gave me. And it never fails to make me smile.

Now I'm back in the real world and forced to consider and balance my transportation options. It sucks to arrive at a job interview with helmet-head. My courier bag isn't big enough to haul everything I need for a weekend trip. And my bike, bless its steel heart, isn't going to take me from Vancouver back to Montreal for the weekend to see my friends. Life can't always be as simple as get-on-your-bike-and-go.

At the same time, I can still see the bored faces of drivers stuck in traffic. I can hear the anger resonating in their horns. I can smell the fumes belching from their exhausts.

Could I really become one of them? Hey, Fact Box!

# TRANSPORT FACT BOX

- Car trips made by an average American suburban family per day: 10
- Time spent in a car by a commuter who lives one hour from work per year: 500 hours (equal to 12 work-weeks)
- Wasted fuel and productivity losses from traffic delays in the United States per year: \$72 billion<sup>1</sup>
- Number of fatalities in car accidents per million drivers: 156.8
- Number of fatalities in cycling accidents per million cyclists: 13.3<sup>2</sup>

The **Ecological Footprint**\* for a 7,000 km journey<sup>3</sup> (equivalent to travelling across Canada)...

- by car (10 litres per 100 km, 1 person): 10,000 sq.m
- by economy class **plane**: 5900 sq.m
- by car (10 litres per 100 km, 2 people): 5000 sq.m
- by **train**: 4000 sq.m
- by hybrid car (4.5 litres per 100 km, 2 people): 2250 sq.m
- by **bus:** 1500 sq.m



\* Ecological Footprint, measured here in square metres, is the amount of land per person used to produce the necessary materials (i.e. the parts of the plane), to absorb the carbon dioxide emitted (through trees and plants), and to absorb the other waste created because of the trip (including the garbage created at the end of the plane's lifecycle).

# **Transport Myths**

# Myth 1: It takes too long to bike or bus around town and it is too inconvenient.

Let's say a 10-minute drive takes you 20 minutes to bike. At first glance, it might appear that driving saves you time. But see if those funny looking numerals tell the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me Mother Earth. Let me ask you: when someone's driving, what are they doing? Commuting. Capital 'C', mut(e)... mute for the muting of the soul. And what is someone doing when biking? Commuting, getting physical activity, getting fresh air AND having fun—quadruple-tasking! That means that a 20-minute bike ride is a 20-minute workout, 20 minutes of sweet oxygenised goodness, 20 minutes of recreation time and 20 minutes of commuting. A similar amount of double-tasking can be accomplished on the bus, or when you carpool where you can read and/or spend social time making new friends or chatting with old ones. If you drive, you'd have to head to a gym to get a workout, take a 20-minute walk and then take some time out to socialize. When all was said and done, you would have to spend at least an hour while a cyclist would accomplish all those things in 20 minutes. Hmmm... maybe driving is an inconvenient waste of time...

# Regular cyclists typically enjoy a fitness level equivalent to being 10 years younger than the rest of the population.<sup>4</sup>

## Myth 2: It's safer to drive in a car.

Driving along in a car, you might look out the window and see a cyclist weaving through traffic and dodging cars that barely acknowledge her presence. You might compare the size of the cyclist to the vehicles around her. And you might think that you're safer in your car than she is on her bike.

## You'd be wrong.

Hurtling along at speeds no human could accomplish without a machine, and surrounded by thousands of pounds of unfeeling metal, you're at a far greater risk in a car than the cyclist who has only her wits and a helmet to protect her. Statistically, you're more than 10 times as likely to die in a motor vehicle than you are on a bike. In fact, more than 90% of all cycling fatalities are the result of cyclists being struck...by cars!<sup>5</sup> The simple fact is that cars kill. Indeed, with more than 100 driving related deaths in America every day, cars have killed more Americans than have died in all the wars fought in the last 100 years! <sup>6</sup>

### Myth 3: Having a car gives me freedom.

People all over Canada are stuck working long hours to pay off debts they racked up in order to pay for their cars. The time it takes to buy the 'freedom' of a car could be used just being free...

# Freedom (or how I learned the restrictions of owning a car ... )





## TRANSPORT



Let's say you want a cheap \$5,000 car, and your salary at your job is eight bucks an hour. It will take you 625 hours of work, or 3 months of full time employment, to pay for your 'freedom'- never mind the additional costs associated with the car, like gas and insurance. You own the car, but you've also sacrificed three and half months of your life. You could have bought a cheap bike, a bus pass, or joined a car co-op, and then taken a two or three-month vacation instead!

If you factor in all the costs of owning a car—devaluation (the decreased value of the car as it gets older), gas, insurance, and mainte-

nance—it averages out to more than \$9,000 a year.<sup>7</sup> That cost doesn't include the taxes and public funds needed to pay for car infrastructure, such as highways and road signage. Nor does it reflect the cost of medical treatment for those injured by automobiles (through car accidents and through increased exposure to automobile pollution), the environmental damage caused by car use, or the subsidization of the automobile manufacturing industry by government money and tax breaks. In Ontario alone, it is estimated that car use and ownership is subsidized to the tune of \$4.8 billion a year!<sup>8</sup>

Bicycles save you money, they allow you to quadruple-task, they give more leg room, and they never stall in the winter. You can fix them yourself, you're always guaranteed a prime parking spot, and you never have to stop at the pump. Next time you are in traffic stuck in a giant box that took hundreds of hours of your life to buy, and thousands of tax dollars to make possible, check out the expression of your fellow drivers. Then compare them to the faces of people out on a bike ride. Which ones look more like freedom to you?

# The average North American works 27 hours a month paying for the 32 hours per month they spend driving!'

#### Myth 4: I need a car because Canadian winters are too cold.

Yes, winter is cold. That doesn't mean you need a car: throughout human history, people have managed to survive the winter comfortably without a car. Biking is an option, even in -40°C weather (check out www.icebike. com). The exertion keeps your body warm, and during the winter months when other outdoor activities are not possible, it's an accessible means of exercise. It may sound crazy, but thousands of people don't stop biking just because the snow falls. With a bit of practice and research into winter clothing, you can ride emissions-free all year round (check out the illustration on the next page).

If winter biking isn't for you, busses are still a great option. You won't have to look for parking or pay for upkeep. Another option is to carpool with people who live in your area, or join a car co-op during the colder months. And finally, you can always move closer to your most regular stomping grounds so you can walk there in your stylish winter duds.

## TRANSPORT



Myth 5: If we all drove fuel-efficient cars our problems would be solved. Fuel-efficient cars certainly help reduce some of the problems associated with car use. However, in many ways fuel-efficient cars are a band-aid solution to a larger problem that has little to do with the amount of fuel they burn. Cars have changed the way that we plan our cities, where we live in our cities, and how we interact with our communities. In many cases, cars
have further isolated us from each other, and reduced the overall amount of physical activity we do. Even a fleet of the most fuel-efficient glass and metal boxes (cars) will still take a lot of energy, water, and resources to produce, will still kill thousands of people every year, and will still add to the tremendous amount of vehicle waste when the car needs to head to the dump.

Fuel-efficient vehicles are less harmful to the environment, and for those circumstances and individuals where a car is necessary they are a fantastic alternative. For example, on the 2003 and 2005 Otesha bicycling tours we felt that the safety benefits of a support vehicle outweighed the negative effects of having a car. Therefore, driving a hybrid car with the best fuel efficiency we could find was our best option. But if you can get by without a car, then a fuel-efficient vehicle isn't a reason to drive more!

## Myth 6: O.K. I know I should carpool, bike, or ride the bus, but that pretty much covers transportation, right?

It's easy to assume that the issue of transportation begins and ends with how we get around everyday—but it's just the beginning!

Thousands of kilometres are travelled to ship goods from producers to consumers, and moving people all around the world! Consider buying used items, or buying from local manufacturers. And when you're planning a vacation, try checking out the beautiful areas in surrounding national parks or cities. Think consciously about where you and your things are going, and where they've come from. Turns out that revolutionizing the road isn't just about changing the wheel that revolves on the road, but also about changing how much road gets revolved on!

I used to consider myself a good driver. I've never been in an accident, so I'm confident behind the wheel. I don't hesitate, and I know my city well. Of course, I don't actually like driving, and usually only do so when I'm in a hurry. So I'm actually kinda aggressive and fast when I'm in a car.

Confident. Fast. Aggressive. I wonder what it would be like to meet a driver like that when I'm on my bike.

I don't consider myself a good driver any more.



### Jasmine Foxlee

IN MY FOUR YEARS at university, I learned about the impacts of human activities on the planet: global warming, the hole in the ozone layer, habitat fragmentation... the list goes on.

I lived close enough to university to ride my bike everyday. It's pretty nice during the summer, which makes riding really easy. But winter is a different story. One morning there was frost on the ground. It was about minus-4 degrees Celsius. My partner had taken the day off work and offered me the keys to his car so I could drive to school. One day in the car can't hurt, right?

But taking the car to university soon turned into a habit, and I found myself using it often for convenience. As the months went by, I became busier with my studies and continued driving the car to school...and to all the other places I needed to go. My partner seemed to be getting a little annoyed about the fact that I was using his car all the time. I decided it was time to buy a car for myself.

Months passed. The weather warmed up, but I had my own car now, and I was driving it all the time. One day I was driving home from university, and I found myself frustrated and annoyed with the traffic. Suddenly, I saw a cyclist zooming by my car. I watched the cyclist weave in and out of the traffic, thinking about the times I used to ride my bike, and I smiled. That happy cyclist used to be me. Riding my bike through traffic was always such fun, passing everyone with such ease.

As I sat in my car surrounded by traffic that day, I looked around me. I looked in my rear view mirror and saw cars as far as the eye could see, all stopped in their tracks with their engines running. To my right was a big suv pumping out carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. I looked down at my steering wheel, and I felt responsible. My actions were contributing to the global warming I had spent so many hours in class learning about.

I was a part of the problem.

Jasmine Foxlee is now living in Darwin, Australia, where she is completing her PhD. She has sold her car and been reunited with her bike. In May 2003 she joined the Otesha Tour to cycle across Canada with the rest of the Otesha hooligans.

Cycling is once again my primary form of transport. As I bike along the shores of Darwin it brings a smile to my face to see all the other happy cyclists changing the world.

In the real world, balancing school and job, I don't ride nearly as much as I did when I was a courier. But I work at a bike shop, my school is pretty close by, and most of my friends ride (or I'm in the process of introducing them to it). So bikes are still a big part of my life.

In fact, I ride pretty much everywhere I go. And everyone knows it: I arrive smiling and out of breath, clutching my helmet. Some people are envious. Some think I'm nuts. Some of them understand. With a little time and effort, every one of them could be like me—and that's a good thing!

Cars are everywhere. Everyone's got one. Cities are being built to accommodate them. But the fact is that they're killing us: running us down on the streets, alienating us from our neighbours, forcing us to sit when we could be active, filling our lungs with smog, killing our trees and warming our planet.

But it's not too late. The solution is right in front of us. She's quiet. She's got two wheels and a little brass bell. And it's becoming easier and easier to get to know her.



When I see an adult on a bicycle, I do not despair for the future of the human race. –H.G. WELLS

# The Community Bike Movement

The car is the machine of big business. The government controls the buses. But the bike...well the bike is the vehicle of the people. With the right know-how, a person can build, ride and fix her bike, taking full responsibility for it from cradle to grave.

This is the philosophy of the community bike movement. Community bike shops and programs have been springing up since the 1960's, when Luud Schimmelpennink of the Dutch anarchist group *Provo* got the idea to fix and release hundreds of free bikes all over the city of Amsterdam.

Today, communities all over the world boast free bike programs, ranging in size and stature from the famous *Copenhagen White Bikes*—which dominate the city's car-free downtown—to tiny fleets of public access bikes on university campuses all over North America.

And then there are the community or co-operative bike shops. Staffed by mechanics and instructors, these shops make cycling and bikes more accessible to people. Some refurbish second-hand or donated bikes to create affordable commuting machines. Others open their shops to community members who wish to do their own repairs. Some teach repair and maintenance, allowing cyclists to become more familiar and comfortable with their bikes. Most reuse and recycle old parts, saving them from the scrap heap and thereby reducing waste production.

#### EMPOWERMENT



These shops range from small, volunteer run spaces such as *Right To Move* in Montreal to large, full service bike shops like Vancouver's, 'Our *Community Bikes!*' Bike-crazy Portland, Oregon, boasts no fewer than 5 community bike shops!

Whether you're an avid cyclist in need of a little help, you want to immerse yourself in bike culture, or you simply have an old clunker you're looking to donate, be on the look-out for one in your community. And if you can't find one, start one up yourself—because hey, that's how it happens! (For info on how to do that, check out: www.transalt.org /info/toolsforlife/index.html)

\$

### Andrea Horan, JULY 2003

I LIVE IN downtown Ottawa. And sometimes, on hot summer days, when the humidity is stifling and the air quality warnings prevent the young, old and vulnerable from being outdoors, I worry about climate change. I worry we don't address our actions that create it—we just adapt to the changes it creates. Hotter summers? Run the air conditioner longer. Tropical storms and prairie droughts? Pay relief money and buy more insurance. Difficulties breathing? Develop, produce, and sell more medications. And each time we adapt like this, someone makes money, the GDP increases and we all think life must be getting better. Sometimes I feel like each time I turn on a light or turn up the heat I am inexorably involved in this cycle of fuel dependency and the climate change it is causing. *(cont...)* 

### But then,

Then it's 5pm. Rushhour. Though, no one is in a rush— Traffic is jammed. Except for me.

I whip through traffic like the breeze. I am *'one less car'* And *'one more bike'*. I hear the sounds, smell the smells And sing To the passing frustrated metal boxes And their climate controlled claustrophobia On wheels.

More leg room, more roads, There will never be enough and Cannot compare To the infinite spaces I can occupy Powered only by my legs, I can cancel out the stink Of a car's combustions I can drown out the rising heat Of climate change I am not creating the "31% of emissions due to transportation."

I will Bike where I need to go and I will not Own a car I am flying down the road Fossil fuel free.

\$

## The U-Pass

At the turn of the Millennium, the University of British Columbia campus was a car-choked nightmare. Streets on, and leading to, the campus were chronically jammed full of carloads of people trying to make morning classes. Garish parking lots were springing up everywhere; even the beloved Hub, home of UBC's Bike Co-op, was under threat—ironically, slated to be torn down and paved to make space for more cars.

Now, five years later, the streets are noticeably clearer of traffic. Many of the new parking lots are all but empty. Busses zip onto campus from all around the city, and the streets are full of students walking and biking between classes.

How did this happen? As part of its sustainability pledge, the University of British Columbia created an organization called TREK to explore and expand environmentally friendly transportation options for students. In 2003, TREK successfully negotiated a 'U-Pass' deal with the Vancouver bus system. The deal was put to a vote and passed by an overwhelming majority of UBC students.

Now, each UBC student automatically gets a bus pass with his or her student card. They can use that pass to zip all around the city—from the North Shore mountains to within a stone's throw of the US border. Since everyone gets the pass, it makes little sense to not take the bus. The program has been so successful that in its first year the U-Pass program increased bus ridership by 53%—from 29,700 to 45,300 passengers every day!<sup>10</sup> And the UBC U-Pass has become an example to other schools and employers in the city, many of whom are currently negotiating similar deals with the bus service.

All this can be credited to TREK, a progressive thinking university, and the thousands of students and faculty who pushed, worked and voted to make it happen. Similar ideas are springing up in a number of cities. It's a recipe that could be put into action anywhere—all you need to do is get fed up with traffic and start dreaming big.

Get started on your campus with the U-pass toolkit: http://www.cutaactu.ca/pdf/U-PassToolkit.pdf

### Car-Free Day in Bogota, Colombia

### Jessica Lax

I left the auditorium, speechless and overflowing with amazement, inspiration and hope. I had just heard Enrique Penalosa, the mayor of Bogota, speak. I knew that a different type of city was not only possible, but actually existed.

Enrique Penalosa told us about how Bogota, a city of 6.4 million people in Columbia (twice the size of Toronto), had shut down private vehicle use in the city from 6:30 am to 7:30 pm on International Car Free Day. On that day, taxis and buses still ran, but over 832,000 cars were left in the driveway. It was also the first day in three years that no traffic related deaths were reported. That was enough to make my excitement neurons fire like crazy. But there was more: Mayor Penalosa's efforts didn't end on Car Free Day.

You see, Mayor Penalosa knew that the majority of people in his city didn't have cars, and he knew that in the past the city had poured thousands of dollars into building more highways. He knew it was time for deep-seated, far-reaching change. He wanted to create a more egalitarian and integrated society by placing equal value on the person who drives a \$10,000 car, and the one that rides a \$10 bicycle. Mayor Penalosa refused to put more money into building better highways, and diverted these funds to building a more effective public transit system and hundreds of kilometres of bike highways. Cyclists, pedestrians and bus riders—the majority of Bogota's citizens—were finally having their voice heard and their needs met.

This was democracy in motion... and wow, what a beautiful thing.

Beyond environmental and pollution reasons, a unique social integration takes place when people of all socio-economic classes sit next to each other in a bus, or stand together at a traffic light on a bicycle. – ENRIQUE PENALOSA

### EMPOWERMENT

**My school used to have** a commuter campus. Every day, students and faculty would drive in from all over the city and from every suburb. In the mornings, the roads leading to school were like parking lots, and students had to dodge cars and choke on exhaust as they made their way between classes.

In an effort to make our campus a safe, friendly and beautiful space, the students, faculty and administration have worked together to turn driving to school into a last resort. We've got our very own, student run bike shop; an alternative transportation program center that co-ordinates carpooling, shuttles and rideboards; a campus-wide community bike fleet; and every student gets a bus pass.

Sure, a lot of people still drive onto campus. But every year, more of us are bussing, riding and getting together to carpool. We're finding fun, healthier and more sustainable ways to get to school. And every person we free from the clutches of car culture becomes a living, breathing reminder of the truth: that whether it's walking out the door, climbing on the bus or pushing down on a pedal, sometimes all it takes to change your life—and the world you live in—is the courage to take that first step.

- They often plough the bike routes in Sweden before they plough the road.
- In Freiberg, Germany, 29% of shopping trips are made by foot, 26% by public transport, 24% by bicycle and only 14% by car.<sup>11</sup>
- [A person...] on a bicycle can go three or four times faster than the pedestrian, but uses five times less energy in the process. He/She carries one gram of his/her weight over a kilometre of flat road at an expense of only 0.15 calories. Equipped with this tool, [a person...] outstrips the efficiency of not only all machines but all other animals as well. – Ivan Illich
- If just half of Canadians signed on the One-Tonne Challenge reducing their annual green-house gas emissions by one tonne
  —the reduction would be equivalent to the planting of 64 million trees! Join the party and sign on at www.co2zilla.ca.







### **Bicycle Ride-In Movie Night**

Imagine a field full of picnic blankets. On these blankets sit happy cyclists. Their bikes lie at their sides. Their helmets are cradled in their laps. Their eyes are focussed on a screen, and stars cover their heads. Many of us are too young to remember drive-ins, but we're all old enough to organize one. Here's a recipe for a night you won't soon forget.

### Ingredients

- A field or backyard
- Audio-video equipment (either a VCR/DVD player, or a laptop, screen or white wall, and LCD projector)
- Power bar and extension cords
- A film—borrow or rent one, preferably bike related. Note: if the film is copyrighted, legally you need to get permission from the distributor. Films licensed under 'Creative Commons' do not have this problem.
- Refreshments: water, juice or maybe even bike-blender fruit smoothies!
- A clear night

### Directions

- 1 Find a space, preferably near a bike path and away from noisy traffic. You might need a permit, or let the park authorities know what you're up to.
- 2 Get your A/V equipment—borrowed (check out your school's A/V department) or rented—power bar and extension cords. You'll also need a source of power, so stock up on extension cords. Or better yet, find out if someone in your community has a bicycle-powered generator!
- 3 Advertise! Let people know by inviting them personally or sending out emails. Put up posters on bike routes and at bike shops. Give out handbills promoting the event, or attach invitations to bicycles parked on bike racks.
- 4 Get everything set up ahead of time so things are ready when your viewers arrive. Make sure you schedule the movie to start after dark so it is visible and glare isn't a problem
- 5 Kick back, enjoy the show and wait for the kudos to roll in.

### ACTION

### **Carbon Offsetting**

Flying somewhere? Here's how you can take action to compensate for the carbon dioxide produced during your flight.

#### Ingredients

• Internet access

Money

• An old cereal box

• String

### Directions

1 Do some research on the Internet to calculate the amount of carbon dioxide that your flight, and you as a traveller on that flight, will produce. There are numerous websites that can help you,<sup>12</sup> and they will also indicate what actions you can take to offset your emissions by actually reducing the carbon dioxide (CO2) in the air! Two great actions are:

a) You can plant a certain number of trees (or pay to purchase the trees for someone else to plant around the world), which absorb CO2 and convert it to oxygen.

b) You can replace a certain number of regular light bulbs around your house with energy-efficient compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs). Saving electricity every time you turn on the light means less electricity must be made, which means fewer fossil fuels must be burned, which means less CO2 in the air to begin with! The Internet travel calculator should give you an exact number of trees to plant or bulbs to replace in order to offset the CO2 emissions from your particular flight.

- 2 You'll need to have some money to purchase the CFL bulbs from your local hardware store, or to buy trees from a nursery, environmental organization, or the city council responsible for the area in which you live. Planting trees that are native to your area is the best option, as they are better suited to the environmental conditions. Make sure you continue to water the tree for some time, at least until it has developed a decent root system and can provide for itself.
- <sup>3</sup> Imagine if everyone on the plane compensated for the amount of carbon dioxide they produced! To let others know about your motivation to take action, make up a little travel tag (from an old cereal box and some string) to attach to your luggage. On your tag, you can write down the amount of carbon dioxide produced by your flight and the number of trees you have planted, or CFLs you have replaced!



## **Go Further!**

Get yourself ready for the road: check out these sites for safety info, winter-biking know-how, kit lists, and deco ideas for your bicycle: http://bikesense.bc.ca/manual.htm (basic info on how to get started) http://bicyclesafe.com (good info on how to not get hit by cars) www.urbanbicyclist.org/cityriderguide.pdf (specific tips for city riding, and some great laughs!)



**Reading : Katherine T. Alvord** (2000). *Divorce Your Car.* Gabriola Island, B.C.: New Society Publishers. **David Engwicht** (1999). *Street Reclaiming*. Gabriola Island, B.C.: New Society Publishers.

**Robert Hunter** (2002). *2030: Confronting Thermageddon in our Lifetime*. Toronto: Arcade Publishing.



**Detective Work**: Find out if your community has a bike co-op, local car co-op, car sharing system, or ride share board/website (www.erideshare.com, or www. telekinesis.ca). If you find one, share the info at the

back of the book! If you don't, start one!



**Letters**: If you live in an urban centre do some research on how accessible your local transit system is.How much do tickets cost? Are they affordable? Are the buses accessible to people with disabilities? What

kind of service is offered? Write letters to your local transit authorities and government and make your voice heard!



**Fun Stuff:** Run a Sustainability Joy Ride in your community—check out the plan of action: www.otesha. ca/being+the+change/take+action/joy+rides.html Join a Critical Mass in your community: http://criticalmassrides.info

Host a carpool dating game: www.best.bc.ca/programsAndServices/ offramp/77\_carpool\_dating\_game.pdf

### Endnotes

- 1 First three statistics from Mitchell, John (2001). 'Urban Sprawl'. National Geographic, July.
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- 3 Note: short-haul flights (those less than 3000 km) emit **64%** more C02/km than long-haul flights, so if you're flying a short distance, it has an even bigger negative impact compared to the train, bus, or car. All ecological footprint figures from Merkel, Jim (2003). Radical Simplicity: Small Footprints on a Finite *Earth*. Consortium Book Sales & Dist.
- 4 Clean Air Network. Benefits of Cycling to AQ and Health. Retrieved December 10th, 2004, from www.gemsnet.org/can/templates/mn\_template.asp?id=34.
- 5 Kiefer, Ken. Is Cycling Dangerous? Retrieved on December 10th, 2004, from www. kenkifer.com/bikepages/health/risks.htm.
- 6 The Web of Hope. Transport Horrors. Retrieved Dec.11, 2004 from www.thewebofhope.com/horrors/transport/.
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- 9 Durning, Alan (1996). 'The Car and the City' Seattle: Northwest Environment Watch.
- 10 UBC Public Affairs. U-Pass increases Bus use by 53 percent, decreases traffic to and from UBC. Retrieved December 11th, 2004, from www.publicaffairs.ubc. ca/media/releases/2003/mr-03-99.html.
- 11 Encycleopedia, For the Love of Bikes. City Bikes. Retrieved December 11th, 2004, from www.encycleopedia.com/index.cfm?pid=21&catID=3.
- 12 One of the more detailed sites we've come across is produced by a British organization called Future Forests. Try www.futureforests.com/calculators/flightcalculatorshop.asp.

## Conclusion

IF YOU'VE SEEN THE ORIGINAL OTESHA SKIT, you know that it ends when Hopeful Hooligan gets to school. That one hour of Hopeful's day is all we show, but that one hour is representative of all the choices Hopeful is going to be able to make in his/her entire life to come. Likewise, the chapters of this book represent only six of the thousands of areas of action in which we will all make choices throughout our lives.

With that said, we're sure you're not surprised to hear that this isn't really the end. In fact, this is only a part of the journey...

### However, the direction it takes is up to you.

You have the power to end this book's journey right now. You can close this book and its 'at one time destined for the landfill' pages, tuck this book away on a shelf, and never think about it again. You can continue to make the same choices you made yesterday and the day before.

You also have the power to join us and further a movement of hope and action right now. You can find someone else to give this book to. You can tell them what you thought about it, show them what you added, and then share all of it with the world. You can make today the day when you are going to make as many conscious choices as you can.

You can start small and keep changing, or you can take a giant leap. Either of these choices makes this book worthwhile, and either one moves us closer to the type of world we all want to see. You can get more information, you can get more involved, you can start a discussion, and you can participate.

> You can change the world. You have the power to make this book just the beginning of the journey. It's all up to you.

The Otesha Project 640 Laverendrye Dr., Ottawa, Ontario, кıj 7C4 www.otesha.ca info@otesha.ca

# My Neighbourhood!

This page has *you* written all over it! Do you know some cool places in your community that match your values? Think others might want to check them out? Share here! Don't forget to clearly label where things are and in what city/town you can find them, as this book might travel really far... If you need more space, just add a page!

Cool ethical clothing companies online:

Stores that sell ethical clothing in my community:

Best thrift store in my community:

Best second hand book store:

Store to buy recycled paper and paper products:

Alternative media radio stations available in my community:

Alternative print media that is available in my community and where to get it:

Stores that sell fair trade coffee, tea, chocolate, cocoa and other goods in my community:

Stores that sell environmentally friendly soaps, laundry detergents, and other cleaning products:

Great places to buy low-packaged, organic, local food:

Closest organic farm to volunteer at, to learn about organic food:

Locations and dates/times of local farmers markets:

Cool ways to get involved in food security issues (soup kitchens, food banks) in my community:

Bike co-ops or cool bike friendly places in my community:

Car co-ops, rideshare boards, or car-pooling sites that I like:

Major streets with bike lanes or paths in my community:

Water, clothing, media, coffee, food, transportation. Every choice we make shapes our world's destination.

A book of hope, made out of waste. Give this empowerment juice a taste!

