



Environment north

2011 Annual Report

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A Message from the President

At this year's AGM we are celebrating Environment North's 40 year Anniversary. "People to Clean Up Lake Superior" began in 1972 as a small group of concerned citizens. PTCULS (they weren't thinking about a nifty acronym) soon grew to become Environment North, an environmental organization with a considerable history in North-western Ontario.

PICTULS was the first regional group to express concern over toxins such as asbestos and the high levels mercury being released into Lake Superior by industry. After a couple of years this group became Environment North and legally incorporated with non-profit and charitable status in 1976.

Environment North (EN), the Citizens Committee Studying Nuclear Waste, the Atikokan Citizens for Nuclear Responsibility and many others, were fundamental in stopping Atomic Energy of Canada's (AECL) plan to bury nuclear waste near Atikokan. This was a time before "social media" so networking took place by phone, snail mail, print media, in person meetings and theatre.

Some accomplishments of the next decades included participation in Ontario's Lands for Life process and ensuring an increase in the area of protected land in the Boreal West Region to 14%. In 2004, mem-



A waterlily in Whitewater Lake north of Armstrong

bers of EN ensured that SynFuel's proposal to build a power plant in Thunder Bay, utilizing toxic tar sands waste as a fuel, would be subject to an Environmental Assessment. Synfuel did not complete the assessment process.

It is evident that over the years one of ways EN has exerted its influence is by calling for appropriate government environmental processes and also by participating in these processes. This is a strategy that we continue to engage in, though some of these environmental processes and opportunities for public engagement are at risk of being eliminated.

There have been government cutbacks to monitoring climate change and water quality. The future of federal and provincial

government processes such as environmental assessments are in jeopardy.

Environment North is proud of its 40-year history and accomplishments in the environmental movement. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to thank all of you who have been part of the organization during that time. As volunteers, you have many competing demands on your time and we appreciate that some of the time you have spent has been with us as we work together for a sustainable future for our local and regional communities. And, we look forward to your continued involvement!

Here's to the next 40!

Charlene Rogers
President

*“A vote for the Economy
is a vote for me.
A vote for the Environment
is a vote for me AND
my grandchildren”*
Scott Harris
Board Member

Frequently used Acronyms

EN Environment North

EFN Environmental Film Network

Issues Oriented

In October 2011 we received a grant from the Ivey Foundation to keep **environmental issues a priority in the provincial election** through various media. We ran radio ads and surveyed the candidates on a number of environmental issues. A condensed version of their responses was published in the Chronicle-Journal. The ads and the more detailed responses to the survey are available on our website.

Public awareness and education on environmental issues is one of EN critical roles and we have collaborated with the Environmental Film Network (EFN) to help fulfill this mandate. Thanks to a grant from the On-

tario Trillium Foundation, **EN and EFN are partners on an 18 month long project** beginning in January 2012. Films are shown at the historic Paramount Theatre. In the past fall season EFN has featured *Mother Nature’s Child* and *So Right So Smart*.

Consider making every third Wednesday of the month a **“Green Night”**. Begin with green conversation and dinner at “Green Drinks” followed by the movie and post-film discussion at the Paramount (to get on the Green Drinks location email list contact EcoSuperior). Upcoming movies will be posted on the EFN website and the EN Events Calendar.

The **EN website was redesigned** to reflect our new issues oriented strategy. Environment North will be concentrating on four main environmental issues: Nuclear Waste, Forestry and Mining, Climate Change and Community Resiliency. If you are interested in being part of a working group on any of these issues, please contact us at environmentnorth@gmail.com.

What follows in the next two pages is a summary of our activities in these areas. Full versions of our letters to government, reports and articles in the Chronicle Journal are available on our website.

Nuclear Waste

Nuclear Energy is back in the spotlight as a result of the disaster at Fukushima, public hearings regarding the potential construction of two new nuclear plants at Darlington in southern Ontario (which ironically occurred within days of the Fukushima disaster) and the search by Canada’s Nuclear Waste Management Organization to find a nuclear waste disposal site. All of the above highlight the safety, cost and environmental issues.

Environment North believes that society can choose a better way. We support a rolling stewardship of monitoring the waste on site until it is absolutely necessary to move. The safety of geological disposal must be better assured or ideally another solution found. Environment North supports a gradual phase-out of nuclear energy. There are published scenarios for Ontario’s electricity supply without coal and without nuclear. This will take time, responsible

development of renewable energy, major commitments to efficiency and conservation, changes to building design and lifestyle adjustments. The rewards are considerable: sustainable energy, a cleaner environment and new green economies.

In 2011, **EN submitted comments at the Darlington hearings** stating that we are opposed to the construction of two new nuclear power plants primarily because of the economics and the creation of more nuclear waste.

Several communities, including a number in Northwestern Ontario, have expressed interest in possibly hosting a disposal site for nuclear waste. It is important for the community members to have information from other points of view, not only the Nuclear Waste Management Organization. To this end, **EN assisted Northwatch in bringing some of the environ-**

mental concerns to the communities of Ear Falls, Ignace, Sioux Lookout, Red Lake and Nipigon. These concerns include: the safety and feasibility of geological disposal and the safety and emergency preparedness along transportation routes. In addition, an “out of sight out of mind” disposal may promote additional development of nuclear energy. And finally, there is the concern that through free trade agreements, these communities could be required to host U.S. nuclear waste as well.

“Into Eternity” - a film that takes a philosophical approach to the inherent difficulties associated with long-term geological disposal of nuclear waste, was shown by the EFN in partnership with EN in Thunder Bay and in partnership with Northwatch in Ear Falls and Ignace. Community screenings can be arranged through EFN.



Entrance to Finland’s nuclear waste disposal site, under construction
From the film “Into Eternity”



Nuclear Waste Management Organization
www.nwmo.ca/sitingprocess

Climate Change

Climate Change is upon us. Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is critical to prevent the worst. However, we will also need to adapt to changes such as an increasing frequency of severe weather events. **Environment North and Northern Connections hosted the conference: “Moving towards Adaptation”.** Northern Connections (NC) is a collaboration between EN, Ontario Nature, the Anishinabek of Gitchi Gami, Northern Ontario Sustainable Communities Partnership, the Sault Naturalists of Ontario, and Michigan, Food Security Research Network, and EFN. Peter Rosenbluth (NC) also wrote an article on behalf of EN about adaptation in infrastructure, forestry and agriculture as the climate changes.

Forestry and Mining

FORESTRY

2011 was the **United Nations Year of the Forest** and our boreal forest was highlighted in a Chronicle Journal article by Kerstin Muth.

Forestry and Mining industries continue to impact boreal ecosystems. In particular these activities will continue to stress the caribou and impact water quality. At the same time they offer economic benefits. Industrial development needs to observe and improve on best practices and in some areas be limited in order to maintain the vitality of this ecosystem.

Julee Boan submitted comments regarding the **woodland caribou protection approach**. Environment North strongly disagrees with the proposed approach that would separate the caribou habitat into different zones and provide exemp-

Environment North and Northern Connections participated in the first Eco-fair in Red Lake in April. A ‘Leap into the Lake for Climate Change’ was a fundraiser for the local homeless shelter. A large patch was cut in the ice and people in dry diving suits helped keep everyone safe. Graham Saunders (EN) and Peter Rosenbluth (NC) were among the 22 brave leapers!

Environment North published three Chronicle Journal articles related to climate change issues: one by Julee Boan on the Green Energy Act and another by Kerstin Muth on future increased of renewable energy transmission in and out of the Northwest. The final article of the year was by Graham Saunders and Kerstin Muth about

tions from the Endangered Species Act for most industrial uses for some zones. The entire caribou habitat range should be subject to regulations under the Endangered Species Act.

Scott Harris attended the **Bio-economy conference** organized by the Cambio (Canadian Bioenergy Association). This organization is interested in the development, promotion and use of bioenergy. Scott’s article on **biomass energy** in the Chronicle Journal outlines some of the environmental concerns of large scale biomass energy production.

MINING

Mining in Northwestern Ontario has always been an environmental concern, but it is not until a new project is proposed and an environmental assessment (EA) undertaken, that public awareness and participa-

current and future amounts of snow. Snow amounts in the next 100 years are predicted to decrease for southern areas of the northwest.

Graham Saunders also appeared on Scot Kyle’s LU radio show discussing “Climate Stabilisation”. Graham and Scott Harris attended the 50th anniversary of Canadian Engineers. Their conference topic in 2011 was on renewable and sustainable technologies.

Susan Grinstead wrote an open letter to Prime Minister Stephen Harper voicing disappointment with the end of the federal Energy Retro-fit program which provided incentive for homeowners to make significant energy use reductions.

tion can occur. Environment North is participating in the first-ever federal/provincial joint panel review of a mine in Ontario—the Marathon PGM-Cu project. During the first phase of the EA, Charlene Rogers prepared comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Assessment Guidelines. Together with Peter Rosenbluth and Lauren Nelson, Charlene also prepared a report entitled “Public Comment Analysis of Panel Reviewed Environmental Assessment Projects in Canada” which provides an overview of the efficacy of citizen involvement in early stages of the EA process. Both of these documents are available for download on the EN website.

Environment North will continue to participate in mining EAs over the next several years.



Christine Penner, co-organizer of the Eco-Fair in Red Lake, is about to take a “Leap for Climate Change” April, 2011

Environment North is participating in the first-ever federal/provincial joint panel review of a mine in Ontario—the Marathon PGM-Cu project.



Ring of Fire area



Central Natural Environment Garden maintained by EcoSuperior



One of the final wind towers under construction at the 99 MW Greenwich windfarm near Dorion. Environment North members Scott Harris, Lucy Laframboise, Charlene Rogers and Kerstin Muth visited the nearly completed windfarm in October 2011.

Community Resiliency

The 2011 AGM featured Faisal Moola discussing **Natural Capital**. He proposes that it is in the best interest of a community to maintain and enhance natural areas for the “services” they provide such as cleaning the air and water and providing recreational and psychological well-being.

The development of green economies are key to community sustainability. Environment North and the Environmental Film Network were part of the **Green Trade Show** in Terrace Bay and the **Green Expo** in Thunder Bay. In September, Graham Saunders was a panel member in the Energy Session at **The Green Economy Forum** organized by Northern Connections.

Environment North supported Deanna Ford in attending a

conference in Toronto organized by the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers. She has started a new business as a professional public **speaker on environmental issues**.

Elysia Petrone-Reitberger wrote article on the demise of the **Lake Superior Binational Forum**. Loss of support from the Federal Government will seriously reduce the ability of communities around Lake Superior to educate, monitor and reduce the level of toxins.

Members of EN visited the **Greenwich Windfarm** in Dorion. This natural resource provides greener energy, helps to economically sustain a community and will never run out.

Kerstin Muth is the representative from EN on the **Earthwise Energy Working Group**. The

group is updating its Net-zero energy for business manual to reflect some the changes in incentive programs and other resources. The group is also examining how the Energy chapter of the Community Environmental Action Plan can be reflected in the city’s Official Plan. Lucy Laframboise and Scott Harris represented EN on the Earthwise Education Working Group.

Lucy has also been working to reduce disposable bag use in Thunder Bay.

Encouraging local food production is part of ensuring community resiliency. Environment North was a sponsor of **Gardening with Short Growing Seasons** by Graham Saunders. There are only a small number of copies remaining at the Bay Credit Union.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”
~ Margaret Mead

2011-2012 Board of Directors

Julee Boan
Sue Grinstead (secretary)
Scott Harris
Ian Kaufman
Lucy Laframboise
Lea Matyuska (treasurer)
Elysia Petrone-Reitberger
Charlene Rogers (president)
Graham Saunders (vice-president)

The Board welcomed Lucy Laframboise for her first term as a board member and appreciates her great enthusiasm and dedication to environmental causes, in particular climate change.

Thank you and best wishes to Ian Kaufman and Elysia Petrone-Reitberger for their contributions. Both are continuing their environmental efforts in other avenues. Ian is busy with his role as sustainability commissioner with the Lakehead University Students Union (LUSU) and also with the True North Community Cooperative. Elysia is currently living in Hamilton. She was the LUSU sustainability commissioner prior to Ian. She has recently completed her thesis titled *Negotiating Change in the 21st century: A look at the Ontario Mining Act Consultation Process*.

2011 Financial Report

	December 2011	December 2010
<i>Receipts</i>		
Memberships	\$330.00	\$620.00
Donations: Individual	55.00	448.16
Corporate	250.00	
Grants and Project Funding	11,090.19	
Project Fundraising	1000.00	1300.00
Other	0	120.00
<i>Total Receipts</i>	\$12,725.19	\$2,488.16
<i>Expenditures</i>		
Charitable Programs and Donations	\$7521.39	\$290.00
Meetings and communication	2,284.15	768.51
Fundraising, conferences	2,933.77	2,295.47
Salary and Benefits	0	0
Membership Fees Paid	85.00	0
Honorariums	0	1,000.00
Professional Fees	0	0
Banking Fees	18.00	10.50
Other	0	0
<i>Total Expenditures</i>	\$12,842.31	\$4,364.48
<i>Assets</i>		
Bay Credit Union PCA	\$6,927.76	
Bay Credit Union term	10,211.08	
<i>Totals</i>	\$17,138.84	
<i>Liabilities</i>		
Lake Superior Initiative		\$1,392.11
Climate Initiative		440.46
Food Initiative		186.60
Ivey Project		554.86
Enduring Property		14,564.81
		\$17,138.84

Acknowledgements

Environment North thanks the members for their ongoing interest and support. We recognize in particular the many contributions of the Bay Credit Union. We also greatly appreciate the Thunder Bay Chronicle Journal for regularly publishing our articles.



Looking out to the Slate Islands from the Terrace Bay Beach

Looking Ahead to the Next Year...

Environment North sees opportunities for citizen action and involvement in a wide variety of environmental issues. The Nuclear Waste Management Organization will be moving closer to its final site selection and local communities will need our help and support. Proposed mining projects along Lake Superior and in the Ring of Fire will require careful consideration and thoughtful input from the public to ensure that, should they proceed, they do so with the greatest care to protecting the natural environment that we all rely on for our health and well-being.

In 2012, the Ontario government's new *Not-for Profit Corporations Act* will come into force and EN will be undertaking a thorough by-law and policy review to ensure we are in compli-

ance with the new Act. Changes related to registered charities suggested by the federal government will also be reviewed in order to ensure we meet any new requirements.

We are pleased to announce that funding is in place for the *Forest Food Initiative*, a collaboration of Ontario Nature, the True North Community Co-operative and EN. The purpose of the initiative is to ensure the resiliency of forest food systems in northern Ontario through education, outreach and effective land-use planning.

Lets stay in touch! Please join our Facebook group or visit our website. And of course, you're welcome to drop us a line at environmentnorth@gmail.com to join our listserve where you'll get regular updates from us.



Paddling near Picnic Point on the day after Canada Day with Pie Island in the distance

Environment North strives to improve and protect the environmental sustainability and socio-economic well-being of Northwestern Ontario through:

- **Leadership**
- **Research**
- **Partnerships**
- **Education**
- **Community advocacy and capacity- building**

Environment North's specific actions revolve around respect and shared responsibility for air, water and land,
the essentials of all life.



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A regional non-government
charitable organization focused
on environmental sustainability

environmentnorth.ca