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"The operative words for citizen activism are organize and mobilize. CUSJ is part of the global green wave movement for change. I invite you to ride the wave with us. You won't find better company; besides our planetary future is riding on it."

~Past President, Margaret Rao

~read more from Margaret on page 5~



Image courtesy of: [Onaman Collective](https://www.onamancollective.com/)

Water is Life:

~~Ripples Across the Land~~



The Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice purposes are to:

- *Develop and maintain a vibrant network of Unitarian social action in Canada and elsewhere and to proactively represent Unitarian principles and values in matters of social justice, and in particular;*
- *Provide opportunities, including through publication of newsletters, for Unitarians and friends to apply their religious, humanistic and spiritual values to social action aimed at the relief of:*
 - 1) *poverty and economic injustice,*
 - 2) *discrimination based on religious, racial or other grounds,*
 - 3) *abuses of human rights whether of individuals or peoples,*
 - 4) *abuses of democratic process, and*
- *Promote peace and security, environmental protection, education, and literacy in keeping with the spirit of Unitarian values.*

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President's Report to *JUSTnews*

by Bill Woolverton



I was elected President at the AGM last May in Toronto, allowing Margaret Rao to step down. The AGM speaker was Joyce Nelson, who gave an interesting talk on the influence of the corporate power structure and ways to resist it. As is our custom, some present and former members of the Board shared a meal with her.

We signed on to the Pact for a Green New Deal and congratulated CUC for signing on as well. While we believe climate change to be an overriding issue (not just in the past election), it is clear that others, such as peace, inequality, Indigenous rights and democratic reform also need to be looked at in tandem with climate change. We

condemned the Murray Segal report on Hassan Diab as offering nothing more than a whitewash with no recommendations to change the law on extradition, and I wrote the Prime Minister and others expressing our view.

We are disturbed that the definition of anti-Semitism adopted from the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance is gaining traction, being accepted by the Canadian government and some other countries. This definition is vague and easily interpreted to paint any criticism of Israel and support for Palestinians as anti-Semitism. We will be promoting definitions of anti-Semitism supported by organizations such as Independent Jewish Voices that specifically identify anti-Semitism as a form of racism that is inherently tied to other forms of racism, and thus would not include legitimate criticism of Israel or support for Palestinians.

We have been looking at ways to ensure that *JUSTnews* is published regularly and express appreciation to Jan Andrews of First Ottawa for her work on layout and design.

Social Justice in the time of COVID-19

Excerpts from news article at <https://cusj.org/news/>

by Leslie Kemp

The world has changed since we started working on this issue of *JUSTnews*. At the beginning of 2020, social justice advocates were mobilizing in support of the Wet'suwet'en and their fight against the Coast Gaslink pipeline. We are now two months into this new reality and it is appropriate to reflect on it from a Unitarian social justice perspective. It is clear that we are facing a multi-pronged crisis. Certainly, the health crisis provoked by COVID-19 is still with us and is likely to be for some time to come. However, we still face a climate catastrophe. We are now smack in the middle of an economic downturn not seen since the 1930s depression in Canada. Globally the prospects for the world's poor are dire. Oxfam released a report in April, [Dignity not Destitution](#), calling for urgent action to prevent up to a half billion people falling into poverty as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

Neoliberalism's ideology of getting government out of the way of making big profits for business has been the dominant ideology for 40 years. This trend saw corporations taking over from areas of responsibility that were previously in the public or not-for-profit domain. One example is seniors' care, which has been woefully neglected, with the most pronounced examples being

for-profit care homes. Long-term care facilities (nursing homes) account for [81% of all deaths in Canada from the Coronavirus](#).

We need to confront the hard reality of who is paying for governments' failing to protect the health of Canadians? Who is paying for this depression? Who is paying for the climate crisis? The flipside to these questions is equally important. Who is benefiting from this 3-headed crisis?

The answer to the first set of questions (who is paying) is most of us. Some would call us the 99% but whatever percentage is chosen, the reality is that most people in Canada are at some risk and specific groups face higher risks. The answer to the flipside of these questions: those at the top of our economic pyramid, the CEOs, highly paid executives and bankers have benefited for years from a system that has enriched them at the expense of many of us.

We must face the truth. The virus of capitalism has wreaked more havoc upon people and the planet than COVID-19 is ever likely to do. As Unitarians, we need to focus attention on the fundamental issues giving rise to such death and devastation. We need to dig deeper to uncover the truth that COVID-19 has so brutally exposed.

To read the full article visit: <https://cusj.org/news/>

A Tribute to Bob Stevenson



*by Frances Deverell,
Past President*

We are shocked and saddened at the sudden death of Bob Stevenson, Past President of the Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice, who accidentally drowned in Cuba, at his favourite resort, while snorkeling. Bob was 79 and as active

as ever at the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa.

For years, Bob chaired the Global Justice Committee (the CUSJ chapter) at First Ottawa as well as both the Refugee Committee and the Building Committee. He worked to ensure a fair share of First Ottawa's income would go to the vulnerable in Ottawa. He was active in the peace movement, and never missed a meeting or stopped promoting the work of the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group. He cared about human rights and social justice.

Bob was an active member of the national version of CUSJ from the outset. As President, he led an Ottawa team to represent the Canadian Unitarians for Social

Justice from 2006 to 2009. Together they wrote many letters to politicians and media on every issue of the day. He was a peace monitor for rallies in the Ottawa community, working to ensure non-violence in demonstrations. A former teacher, he was well read and knowledgeable and shared his knowledge generously. He promoted the *Monitor*, Research Magazine of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Friends describe Bob as "a compassionate and caring man," and "one of the most decent people I have had the pleasure to know." "I had enormous respect for his perseverance, his dedication, his initiative, and his caring spirit." "His personality managed to insert a positive attitude to whatever group he was working with." Another Past President, Margaret Rao writes, "I will miss his many contributions to CUSJ, his personal support and warm smile. His tragic death leaves a gaping hole amongst us." He was an inspiration to us all.

Bob is survived by his loving, supportive wife, Linda, his four children and their families.

A memorial service will be held at a future date yet to be announced. The family has requested memorial donations to the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa in lieu of flowers.



Stakes High for Planet Earth: A New Way of Being is Needed

by Margaret Rao

With climate change bearing down on planet Earth, we have seen some of the hottest years on record, increased number of floods and catastrophic wildfires in Australia, the Amazon rainforest and Siberia. With our 24/7 newsfeeds assaulting sense and sensibilities in this age of highspeed internet, my advice to you, my fellow CUSJers, as I step down as President, is to unplug from everything and take in the soothing sights, sounds and smells of nature in your neighbourhood. Be glad and grateful to be alive at this moment in time for it is a once in a lifetime gift, not to be repeated. Cultivate the silent, sacred space inside of you, also available to you 24/7, to keep you grounded and balanced. Find a like-minded justice group or community that makes you feel wanted and needed. I'm lucky to have smart and caring activist friends in my life who do the work of justice in the world with hope-filled purpose. Most people are aware that we are living in life threatening times, caused by a destructive, fossil-fuel based military-industrial-financial complex. In the oceans alone, half of coral reefs, the "trees of the sea," have been lost due to human activity, including plastic pollutants. Urgent action to transition to an alternative, people and planet-friendly economy is needed. There are simple and more complex solutions to this multi-faceted crisis and there are good people on every continent working on them.

The stakes are high and require personal, political and societal commitment to a new way of being and acting in the world. Joining the global student-led #FridaysForFuture movement begun by Greta Thunberg in Sweden is one step in that direction. Join [Project Drawdown](#) online or in a neighbourhood near you. Join the growing movement for the [Pact for a Green New Deal](#), an offspring of the Québec Pacte pour la Transition, which you can sign on to online. We need to urge our municipal, regional, national and global governments to declare a climate emergency and then act on it. It is happening. Citizens from all walks of

life took over downtown London streets under the Extinction Rebellion banner, which resulted in, not only arrests, but the UK Parliament's decision to declare a climate emergency.

Last summer I took part in kitchen table conversations, an intergenerational initiative to encourage discussion and action on the climate crisis. Democracy begins around the kitchen table. Although I have stepped down from the helm of our national network, I will remain on the Board in this time of transition for our beloved organization. The operative words for citizen activism are organize and mobilize. CUSJ is part of the global green wave movement for change. I invite you to ride the wave with us. You won't find better company; besides our planetary future is riding on it.

Lastly, thank you for your vote of confidence in me as your President for the past five years. I would also like to thank the current and departing Board members for their steadfast dedication to CUSJ, especially former Vice President, Bill Woolverton, who has agreed to step in as Interim President. It was an honour and privilege to serve you.

Love & Justice!!

Your appreciative Past President



The Unitarian Congregation in Mississauga (UCM)

by John Rowell

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Our water protection initiatives in 2019 were a great fit with the Canadian Unitarian Council's Ripple Effect Call to Action for 2019-2020. We set a goal to obtain a Green Sanctuary designation from the Unitarian Universalist Association (just received in January 2020), and part of our program was a focus on water conservation and protection. To this end, we co-sponsored, with Kairos Canada, a Reconciliation in the Watershed Conference on April 26-27 at UCM.

In February 2019 we had a letter-writing and petition campaign urging a ban on sales of single-use water bottles at the Regions of Peel and Halton, and City of Mississauga offices and facilities, and a letter to the Minister of Conservation, Environment and Parks urging a similar ban at provincial government buildings and parks. We followed up with live deputations at the City of Mississauga, Region of Peel and City of Brampton Council Chambers, and UCM was host to several meetings of the Mississauga Climate Action Group from May to year-end. We witnessed the City of Mississauga adopt a Climate Change Plan in December 2019.

On UCM property we have already done the following:

- Became a plastic water bottle free zone. We purchased water carafes for our rental events, and renters are following our policy.
- Installed a Rain Garden with the support of the Credit Valley Conservation Authority in 2016.
- 10 years ago installed a bio-filter septic system for all water use in buildings.
- In 2012 created a berm and swale beside our parking lot to promote healthy water return to the earth.
- Use no pesticides on our grounds, and plant native shrubs and trees in our landscaping.

Our congregation is considering extra initiatives such as solar panels and an electric car charge station, but we may wait until there are better provincial subsidies.



Grand River Unitarian, Kitchener Ontario

by Carol Burrows & Kathy Mostardi

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The Climate Action Group is currently working with members of the congregation to provide feedback to an Ontario government discussion paper on reducing litter and waste in our communities. This action was inspired by a speaker from the Wellington Water Watchers who provided a sermon and Q&A at a service on March 24, 2019. Our group contacted the speaker prior to the service and learned about this important action. We are encouraging people to provide feedback in the form of two actions the government can take:

1. Banning all bottled water extraction in Ontario
2. Banning single-use plastics within the next 5 years

We feel both these actions will have a large stewardship impact on our water resources, while also reducing waste diversion needs and reducing our carbon footprint. We have put together some material for congregants to help them write their feedback.

We are just beginning the research for our next initiative: to investigate and assist the congregation with various green sanctuary programs.

First Unitarian Church of Hamilton

by Gail Rappolt

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We have been working towards being a Blue Community (or a Green Sanctuary) for many years:

- We have banned the use of water bottles in our space both for use by the congregation and for rentals
- We have put in special toilets that reduce water consumption
- We have a very efficient dishwasher
- We are working hard to create a Carolinian Garden to reduce the amount of water used for summer garden watering.

Our three main local social justice projects currently are:

- Supporting a local community centre called Eva Rothwell with volunteer time and fundraising
- Researching about and advocating for affordable housing and support for the homeless
- Recertifying as a welcoming congregation
- We have an on-going effort to build understanding and commitment with urban Indigenous agencies and Six Nations as part of our Truth, Healing and Reconciliation work.

Neighbourhood Unitarian Universalist Congregation

by Nancy Vander Plaats

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Our congregation's Social and Environmental Action Committee has just recently renewed its efforts to get accreditation through Greening Sacred Spaces, a program of Faith and the Common Good. This ecumenical program includes some water conservation measures as well as other environmental initiatives. We also held a water walk in May 2019 and invited all area UU congregations to attend.

Don Heights focuses on Pikangikum Water Project

by Audrey Chin

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Pikangikum is a First Nations community in northwestern Ontario. It came to national attention after a wave of youth suicides in 2011. The Pikangikum Working Group (PWG) formed to work with the Pikangikum elders and school system. The community identified 12 priorities, with a new school and clean water as the top two.

415/450 homes (90%+) do not have water or waste-water services. Residents get their water from 7 simple water stations and must carry it home. For years the entire community was on a boil water advisory. Since 2013, Pikangikum Water Project, has equipped 24 homes with clean water and waste water removal facilities and the skills/labour training and jobs that go with the system. Habitat for Humanity Manitoba taught building skills to local youth so that they can install and maintain the systems. A diesel engine powered the system until they accessed the grid in 2018.

Funding has come from the Anglican Church, the Mennonite Service Committee, and other donors including Don Heights. The government of Canada matched funds, but stopped when the boil water advisory was finally lifted, even though the job was not done.

Families of Pikangikum, mostly elderly and with extreme health constraints, express relief and happiness in having access to clean water, toilets and bathing facilities at home.

UUEstrie: Water for Women Canada

by Rachel Garber

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In Kabrousse, Senegal, village women market-gardeners defy sandy soil, declining rainfall, and a rising ocean level thanks to climate change. A water-bottling company and a nearby golf course tap into the waning water table. The women's days have been largely spent as unpaid water carriers.

Enter *Water for Women Canada*, led by Jonathon Ellison, member of UUEstrie, North Hatley, Quebec. Trained as both a landscape architect and a clown, Jonathon approaches these challenges with humour and inventiveness. Alongside Senegalese women trainers, he engages the villagers' trust through humour, and listens closely to the women's ideas. One day he is working with them in the fields, dressed as a clown. The next, working with engineers to drill wells, installing solar-powered pumps and water towers, or devising less backbreaking ways to transport water. Or providing seeds for more varied crops and teaching about soil development, marketing strategies, and village banking.

Results have been life-changing. In one two-hectare garden, harvests grew from 56 kilos in 2016 to 50,000 kilos in 2018. The average time a woman spent watering diminished from 4.5 hours/day to 1.6 hours. Gardening hours grew from 0.25 hour/day to 4 hours. Food varieties expanded from 3 to 21. The number of boys helping their mothers garden grew from zero to 38. And the work continues!

Info: <https://www.facebook.com/waterforwomen/>,
executiveclown@gmail.com



*Jonathon Ellison as a
clown, with a friend.*

Photo credit: Water for Women Canada

Water is Life: Ripples Across the Land

by Leslie Kemp

All living organisms depend on water. From the tiniest microbe to the largest of mammals, water is life. Humans use water domestically for drinking, cooking, bathing and cleaning and, on a larger scale, depend on it for growing and sourcing food and for other forms of agriculture and aquaculture, for manufacturing, electrical power generation, mining, oil and gas and recreation.

With 9% of its surface covered by fresh water, Canada has a deserved reputation as a bountiful source of water. Bounded by three oceans and with more lakes than the rest of the world combined, Canada's lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands contain one-fifth of the world's freshwater.

Yet, there are mounting threats to Canada's waters from agricultural practices that leach agrochemicals and bacteria into groundwater, oil spills, fracking, industrial contamination, climate change, melting ice caps, eroding municipal infrastructure and the threat of privatization. All of Canada's 167 sub-watersheds are under stress, and wildlife that rely on freshwater are under threat; native fish species in Lake Ontario dropped 32% on average in the past 25 years. These eco-systems are stressed by growing urbanization, agriculture and industry as well as by rising water temperatures and changes in precipitation brought on by climate change, resulting in more droughts and more flooding.

Water use

The largest uses of water in Canada are for thermal power generation and manufacturing. While agriculture uses a

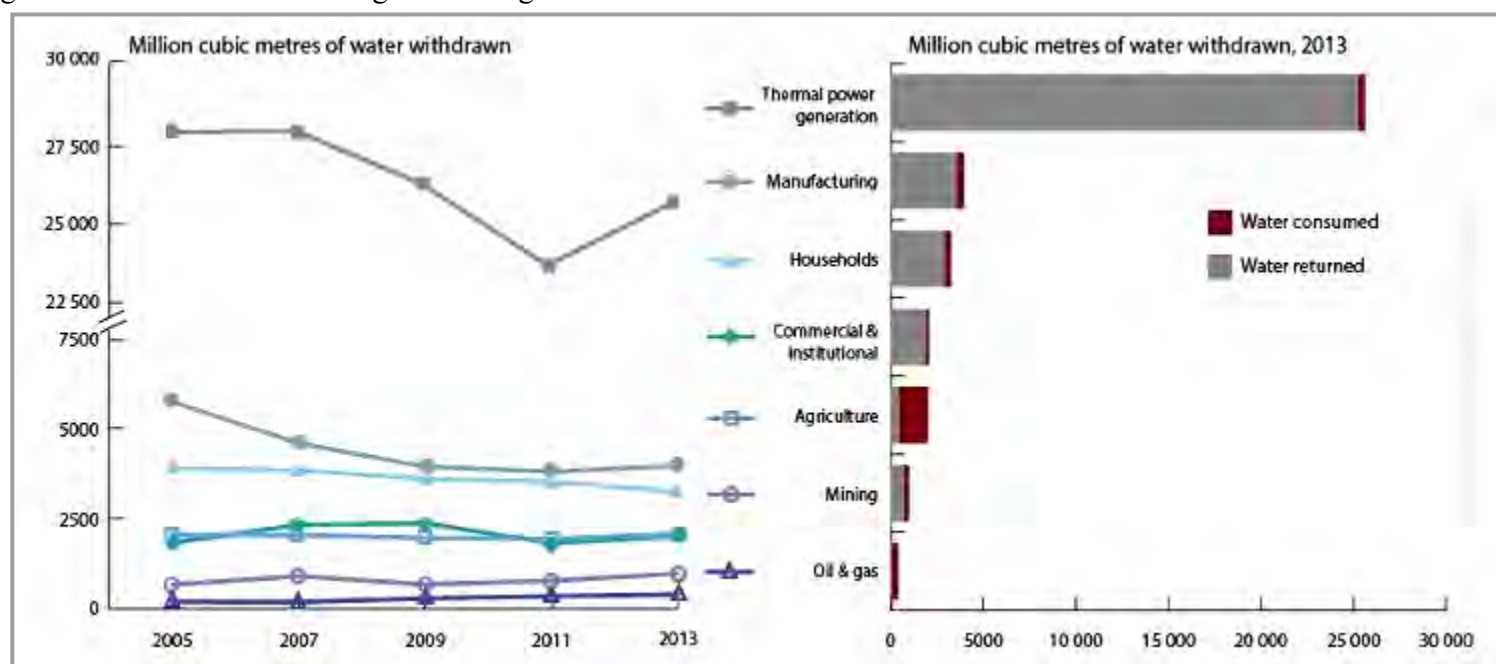
relatively small amount of water compared with these uses, it consumes much of what it uses, returning less than 30% to sources, making it the largest consumer of water. Thermal power warms the water, which has a detrimental effect on the eco-system and manufacturing often returns polluted water.

Contaminated drinking water on First Nations reserves

Not everyone benefits from the bounty of Canada's fresh water. Hundreds of First Nations communities in Canada have not had clean drinking water for decades, particularly in northern Ontario and to a lesser degree in Saskatchewan. After years of inaction, with exposure internationally, this shameful truth is finally being addressed. In 2015 and 2016, Human Rights Watch visited several First Nations in Ontario. They reported that *"In communities like Neskantaga and Shoal Lake 40 First Nations, where advisories have existed for approximately 20 years each, a whole generation of children grew up unable to drink the water from the taps."*

As of February 2020, the government of Canada reports that 88 long-term drinking water advisories have been lifted since November 2015 with 61 long-term drinking advisories remaining. They expect all long-term drinking water advisories to be lifted by March 2021.

As of September 30, 2019, they report that 441 projects are underway or have been completed to repair, upgrade or build infrastructure with more supporting projects and feasibility studies in the design phase.



Water withdrawal by sector, Canada, 2005 to 2013, Government of Canada

Water is Life: Ripples Across the Land, *cont . . .*

The threat of public-private partnerships (P3s)

A number of organizations, including the Council of Canadians and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, have been sounding the warning bell about governments' growing reliance on P3s to build infrastructure for First Nations and municipal water and sewer systems, pointing to higher costs for building and maintaining these systems, while profits go to corporations. The Council of Canadians supported the new and higher standards for municipal wastewater treatment, however, it noted that the only funding is through the Canadian Infrastructure Bank, which is "run by corporations and promotes P3s." This flies in the face of trends around the world. According to *Rabble.ca*:

"At least 235 cities in 37 countries have de-privatized their water over the past 15 years, with France and the United States at the head of the pack. Paris made its water public again in 2010 and immediately saved €35 million a year, while at the same time providing subsidies to those who were struggling to pay under privatization."

Oil spills and fracking: a threat to waters

The Tsleil-Waututh, Coldwater Indian Band, Squamish Nation and others fighting the proposed Trans Mountain Pipeline have well-founded fears of a potential oil spill off the BC coast. Just ask the Heiltsuk, who live on the central coast of British Columbia. The Heiltsuk learned first-hand about the devastating impact of an oil spill when the Nathan E. Stewart tugboat sank in their waters, adjacent to an ancient Heiltsuk village site and Heiltsuk marine harvesting area, in October 2016. The 110,000 litres of diesel oil contaminated key shellfish harvesting areas and critical habitat for the Northern abalone. Heiltsuk was one of the Nations that won a landmark case stopping Enbridge Northern Gateway in 2016. Tragically, they are now left dealing with long-term and catastrophic damage to the health of their land, waters, and culture.

The Social Justice Committee of the Unitarian Church of Vancouver, in collaboration with the Vancouver Quakers, recently held a fundraiser for the Heiltsuk, raising over \$7,500 towards their legal challenge. The Heiltsuk are

suing the owner of the tug, Kirby Corporation, and the governments of Canada and BC. Their case seeks to challenge the constitutionality of Canada's oil spill response; compensate the Heiltsuk for cultural and economic losses due to the spill; and establish Heiltsuk Aboriginal title to reserve lands, near-shore and seabed in the Seaforth Channel and surrounding areas.

Another threat to water quality is fracking, particularly its detrimental effect on groundwater. The chemicals used in fracking and the gas which is being extracted have been found to leak into water supplies. High levels of ethane, methane, chromium-6 and benzene have been found in some wells near fracking operations. In 2016, Scientific American reported on a comprehensive, peer-reviewed study that confirmed people's water wells in Pavillion, Wyoming (and the groundwater in the Wind River Basin) were

contaminated with toxic chemicals from fracking. The sampling wells contained methanol as well as high levels of diesel compounds. The deep groundwater in the region contained high levels of salt and anomalous ions that are found in fracking fluid, which suggests that fracking fluids may have migrated directly into the aquifer through fractures.

According to the Safe Drinking Water Foundation, Canada's most active fracking region is Southern Saskatchewan's Bakken region. Fracking projects are at various

stages of exploration and drilling in British Columbia and Alberta in the Montney Shale and the Horn River Shale. Massive shale explorations and developments are also being planned in Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick with exploration taking place in Ontario and Manitoba.

The First Nation communities of Fort Chipewyan, downstream from the Fort McMurray oilsands, know all too well the lethal mixture of oil and water. Dr. John O'Connor, a physician who treated Fort Chipewyan patients, sounded an alarm about the high rate of cancer he was seeing in the community.

continued on page 10 . . .



Image Courtesy of: [Onaman Collective](#)

Water is Life: Ripples Across the Land, *cont . . .*

Rates were particularly high for cancers of the blood and lymphatic system, biliary tract and soft tissue. Research confirmed there was a 30.7% higher rate than would be expected. In 2014, another study:

“ . . . measured contaminants not only in water but also in beavers, ducks, fish, moose and muskrats—animals consumed as part of a traditional diet for those who continue to live off the land in the Peace-Athabasca Delta. . . the animals contained high concentrations of pollutants such as carcinogenic polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and heavy metals such as arsenic, mercury, cadmium and selenium. All of these are byproducts of extracting and upgrading bitumen. Arsenic in particular has been linked to increased risk of biliary tract cancer. ”

Floods increasing with climate change

Floods are the second most common natural disaster in Canada, with 241 flood disasters between 1900 and 2005. However, in recent years there have been more frequent floods and more severe floods than in the past. Before 1990, only three Canadian disasters exceeded \$500 million in damages. In the past decade alone, nine surpassed that amount.

In 1997, the Red River in southern Manitoba experienced what was called “the flood of the century,” the most severe Red River flood since 1826. In 2009, the Red River experienced a flood that lasted for 120 days, with the most widespread flooding along the Assiniboine River on record. Just two years later, in 2011, southern Manitoba experienced another catastrophic flood, estimated to be a 1

in 300-year flood, on the Assiniboine River south of Portage la Prairie. In 2013, Calgary and southern Alberta experienced a major flood causing 100,000 people to be evacuated and extensive damage, power outages and the closure of the Trans-Canada Highway and Highway 1A, as well as many other highways and roads. Other parts of the country, including Québec, southern Ontario, Newfoundland, BC and Saskatchewan, experienced large floods in the past two decades.

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March 22 is World Water Day. This year’s theme is water and climate change. Flooding is but one effect of climate change. Global warming is shrinking glaciers and western Canada is one of the places it is happening fastest, losing more than 1% of their mass every year. At this rate, glaciers will not see the end of the century. What will happen to the rivers flowing from the glaciers into Canada’s prairies? Without this vital water, how will the prairies grow the grains that Canada and the world depend on? Canada is not immune to the water crisis facing the planet. While industrial pollution and inadequate water infrastructure threatens water quality, the biggest dangers lie ahead, as sea levels rise, rivers dry up and more drought and increased flooding wreak havoc on the land and its people. Humanity needs to face up to this unprecedented disaster. Do we continue to allow capitalism to grow unfettered, with its large-scale, polluting industry, or do we create a world where both people and the planet thrive?



## Book Reviews

### **Boiling Point: Government Neglect, Corporate Abuse and Canada's Water Crisis by Maude Barlow, ECW Press, 2016, Toronto**

*Review by Kathie Cram*

Be prepared to take notes. There is much to learn from Barlow's *Boiling Point*. In this book, Barlow builds on her "blue trilogy" series, where she uncovers a global water crisis. Now, she turns her eye on the looming water crisis in Canada. She documents with statistics, case studies, and policy analysis how government neglect (mostly during the Harper era), corporate profit, and exploitation of Indigenous land and water are placing everyone at risk.

The dense detail about the water crisis is somewhat difficult to absorb. But, one key message stands out: Canadians need a national water strategy, rooted in the principle that water is a human right.

Given that we accept the science in her book and now understand the depth of the problem, what can we do? She describes, in her last chapter, strategies for local action, such as the Blue Communities movement. She also outlines key principles for a new national water ethic, and advocates for specific government policies (e.g., reinstatement and improvement of the Fisheries and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Acts, enforceable waste water disposable standards, etc.).

Barlow's book provides useful information to advocate for progressive change and it is relevant to Unitarians. Our shared belief in the interdependent web of life, democratic processes, reconciliation, and social justice for all are fundamentally challenged by the move towards water privatization and climate change. What would happen if Unitarian social justice committees together turned their attention to the water crisis?



### **Blue Revolution: Unmaking America's Water Project by Cynthia Barnett, ©2011, Beacon Press**

*Review by Janet Vickers and Frances Deverell*

Barnett opens with water as a symbol of affluence: extravagant waste, swimming pools and ubiquitous fountains for the rich. The metro region of Sacramento uses nearly 300 gallons of water per person per day . . . compared to Perth, Australia (75 gallons), Londoners (42 gallons), and the Dutch (33 gallons). She searches the world to find out why we use water so freely and what to do about it.

According to Barnett, it is the flat rate charge (people or corporations pay the same low rate no matter what they use) that permits scandalous overconsumption. We believe that water is unlimited and free. For water to be a human right, a basic amount must be cheap, but beyond that, the more you use the more you pay. Price is the signal that calls for better practices.

And we know what those practices are. This book is full of good ideas. With a community-wide ethic we can make savings in every sphere of water use. Many of the solutions will also decentralize our water systems and reconnect us to our natural bond with the source of life.

The blue revolution is a revolution in our attitudes—how we view water. Water is a gift of life and a human right, not a commodity. Knowing our local water sources and valuing them leads us to a new ethic of stewardship. The blue revolution is a call to relationship and reconnection with water as the source of life.



## Book Reviews, cont...

### Surviving Civilization's Collapse, Philip Symons,

Available at: [philipsymons.ca](http://philipsymons.ca)

#### Review by Cym Gomery

CUSJ member Philip Symons' concise guide, *Surviving Civilization's Collapse*, explores humanity's history, its quirky psyche, and its options for survival.

I recently attended a small group video presentation (*Regeneration* by Daniel Wahl) and discussion on the subject of climate change. It was evident from the reactions of the attendees, that for some (activists and news junkies) the climate crisis was a familiar problem that they had been actively addressing, while for others, the prospect of massive death of our own species in the foreseeable future was something that they had previously not considered. In this latter group, the comments were all along the lines of "What can we do?"

Philip Symons' little guidebook, which can be read in a couple of hours, was made for members of that second group, who have likely been concentrated on their lives and families, without the luxury or inclination to study this issue. Symons provides examples of societies that failed, and some that succeeded. If you have already read Jared Diamond's *Collapse*, then skip ahead to Chapter 5 of Symons' book, which looks at some possible solutions as follows:

1. Strengthen democracy. Symons looks at municipal, provincial, federal and world governance mechanisms, and some of the lessons here are: get involved in local decision-making processes and community groups; oppose trade deals like NAFTA; oppose corporate hegemony and fight for electoral reform away from our First-past-the-post system. Promote equal distribution of wealth. Here, Symons' suggestions will be familiar to garden-variety



activists: limit extremes of inequality through effective taxation; tackle tax havens; raise the minimum wage; introduce basic income.

2. Encourage global population reduction. I differ with Symons on the inclusion of this one. It is obvious that there is a correlation between too many humans and too much CO2, but the "obvious" solutions that come to mind—suicide, infanticide, used in some primitive cultures—

are in fact not viable options here and now. Author Paul Ehrlich started exploring the subject of overpopulation decades ago, and over time his opinion evolved, so that his later book, *One With Nineveh: Politics, Consumption, and the Human Future*, concluded counter-intuitively, that focussing on equalizing the prospects of all humans is the best way to reduce overpopulation (prosperous, egalitarian societies naturally produce less children). But we don't have time to wait for population numbers to fall "organically"!

3. Mitigate climate change and the impact of fossil fuels. This is a good one. Stop building pipelines. Stop destroying forests and plant trees . . . many trees. Go plant a tree now, if possible.

I encourage CUSJ members to buy this book and to read it. It is eminently readable (Symons' writing skills having been honed by many years as editor of *JUSTnews*), and the elegant presentation includes some beautiful color photos, plus handy graphs and charts. If your church would like to order this book for your congregation, the best way to proceed is to contact your local independent bookstore and ask them to order it. This way you avoid paying postage. Bookshops and individuals can order the book at: [philipsymons.ca](http://philipsymons.ca).

# Truth before Reconciliation: Reflections on State-Sanctioned Violence Towards Indigenous Peoples

by Leslie Kemp, with extensive quotes from Bruce McIvor and Aline LaFlamme

Bruce McIvor, Métis lawyer and UCV member, told a story at a February 9<sup>th</sup> service at the Unitarian Church of Vancouver.

*“On a blustery day in northern Ontario, over a hundred miles from the nearest road, I informed Anishinaabe clients that the provincial government was finally willing to sit down and explore avenues for them to exercise their inherent Indigenous ‘jurisdiction’. The Elders politely smiled, turned away and spoke among themselves in Oji-Cree. After a few minutes, as often happens, I was told a story:*

*It was a story about being a child and wanting to visit cousins in the neighbouring community down river. Of traveling in an open boat, of rounding a bend in the river and seeing cousins handcuffed to poplar trees.*

*For my clients the word ‘jurisdiction’ didn’t connote fairness, justice and the rule of law. It conjured visions of the personifications of government and institutional authority, the priest, the RCMP officer, the Indian Agent—the people who handcuffed their cousins to poplar trees.*

*The threat and reality of violence extends beyond language—it has become part of the built environment that contains and defines our daily experiences.”*

The RCMP’s military-style assault on Feb 6<sup>th</sup> on the traditional territory of the Wet’suwet’en in north western BC has sparked a wave of demonstrations, blockades and solidarity actions across Canada and beyond. This includes ongoing road and VIA and CN rail blockages, a three-day blockade to the Port of Vancouver, blocking access to the BC Parliament Buildings the day the speech to the throne was to be delivered, sit-ins at government offices and more.

The Wet’suwet’en, led by their traditional chiefs, set up camps to peacefully claim their control of this territory, land that has never been relinquished by treaty. The hereditary chiefs are a traditional government structured on a matrilineal basis that predates the band council



system set up under the Indian Act. Since 2010, they have been trying to register their concern about the impact of the gas pipeline that Coastal GasLink wants to build through their homelands.

Freda Huson, director of the Unist’ot’en Healing Centre spoke on February 8<sup>th</sup> in response to the RCMP:

*Shame on you Canada. Shame on you Justin Trudeau. Shame on you John Horgan, when you spoke of reconciliation in our feast hall, and you basically spit in my chiefs’ face by refusing to talk to them.*

Unist’ot’en matriarchs and Indigenous supporters were in ceremony, refusing to talk to police. They burned the injunction and erected a traditional funeral pyre with a homemade flag on top that read “*Reconciliation is Dead.*”

All levels of government in Canada have been talking about the importance of “reconciliation” between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, about building a new relationship of respect.

Despite all of the rhetoric about reconciliation, not much has changed in Canada’s relationship with Indigenous peoples. It is still about the land. The state will go to almost any length to secure access to resources and land for capitalist industry.

*continued on page 14 . . .*

# Truth before Reconciliation: Reflections on State-Sanctioned Violence Towards Indigenous Peoples, cont. . .

*“Violence towards Indigenous people, personal, institutional and state-sanctioned, is woven into the very fabric of Canadian life, both its history and its present”, says Bruce McIvor, who works extensively with First Nations across the country. “With [the] RCMP raid on the Wet’suwet’en, violence has also become the hallmark of reconciliation.”*



Bruce McIvor

*“Importantly, Canadian state-sanctioned violence against Indigenous people is not simply a matter of history and easy apologies. It is a modern-day reality. Think back over the last 20 years: Oka, Gustafsen Lake, Ipperwash, Burnt Church, Elsipogtog, Unist’ot’en,” said McIvor. “This week my Wet’suwet’en clients in northern British Columbia again faced the reality of*

*what it too often means to be an Indigenous person in Canada. While Wet’suwet’en Hereditary Chiefs and their supporters seek to defend their land against a multinational pipeline company and a provincial government that appears to believe reconciliation occurs at the end of a gun, the RCMP again amassed an armed force in an attempt to overwhelm and subdue them.”*

At the February 9<sup>th</sup> service, Métis elder, Aline LaFlamme said:

*“We cannot come to reconciliation until we come to some kind of shared truth. We are not there yet. We need a shared truth.”*

Recent events have made it clearer than ever that we do not have a shared truth. While there is significant public support for the Wet’suwet’en (a recent poll has indicated that 39% of Canadians believe the protests are legitimate and justified), the interests of industry prevail, and governments will go to almost anything length to ensure these interests are protected.

According to Shiri Pasternak, research director at Ryerson University’s Yellowhead Institute:

*“the Canadian government has tightened internal control over the surveillance of Indigenous peoples and more closely integrated industry and security imperatives, which has included sharing classified intelligence across law enforcement agencies and with industry actors.”*





# Truth before Reconciliation: Reflections on State-Sanctioned Violence Towards Indigenous Peoples, *cont . . .*

An illustration of government hypocrisy towards Indigenous peoples was the BC NDP's introduction, with great fanfare, of Bill 41, Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act which was passed into law in November 2019. The Article 27 reads:

*"States shall establish and implement, in conjunction with indigenous peoples concerned, a fair, independent, impartial, open and transparent process, giving due recognition to indigenous peoples' laws, traditions, customs and land tenure systems, to recognize and adjudicate the rights of indigenous peoples pertaining to their lands, territories and resources, including those which were traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used. Indigenous peoples shall have the right to participate in this process."*

Yet just two months later, on December 31<sup>st</sup>, the BC Supreme Court granted another injunction allowing Coastal GasLink to access Wet'suwet'en territory, over the objections of the Wet'suwet'en chiefs. The 670-kilometer pipeline, approved by the BC NDP, will extend from northeastern BC to Kitimat, where an \$18 billion liquefied natural-gas export plant is under construction.

A fundamental contradiction exists between Indigenous views of land and those of capitalist industry. For industry, it's about private property and extracting as much value from the land as possible to make a profit. Governments, as allies of industry, structure the laws and use the police and courts to ensure profits for industry. Indigenous peoples have used the land in a sustainable way for millennia so it, in turn, can sustain future generations.

Aline LaFlamme says:

*"If we are ever going to come to reconciliation, we are going to have a long, hard look at what that means – unceded – it means it wasn't sold, it wasn't relinquished, it wasn't transferred, it wasn't given, it wasn't surrendered, it wasn't traded. It means it still belongs to the original owners."*

Bruce said, "As Unitarians what can we do? First, we can actively and unflinchingly recognize that violence is central to the Indigenous experience in Canada. Second, we can speak out loud and strong for all to hear, especially public officials, that we will neither ignore this shameful reality or continue to allow our governments to speak of reconciliation while cynically employing the threat and reality of violence to silence and oppress Indigenous people."

He concluded by saying, *"My favourite hymn in our hymnal is "We are a Gentle, Angry People. Let us be those people."*



Image courtesy of: [Onaman Collective](#)





## **Infinite Power**

*by Janet Vickers*

is not a zero sum game but a journey  
a stone thrown in a lake  
circular ripples emanating outward  
parallel phylogenesis toward the shore  
and we are droplets  
splashing into other droplets  
falling and rising with the breeze  
immersing into the universal body of water  
and ascending towards the sun  
we laugh, we sing, we sink, we swim  
all the rest is construct.

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