

For Whales' Sake
By Jackie Hildering

Climate Change?

There is a wind of change blowing through our land, a wind that seems to have raised awareness to the point that "The Environment" ranks currently as one of the greatest concerns for Canadians.

What has catalyzed this change? It must be many a factor but literally something in the air is at least partly responsible.

There are few Canadians who have been untouched by the extreme weather of the last months. Not only have we coped with our local doses of extreme winds, falling trees, power outages and dumps of snow. The media brings the reports of the great fallen trees of Stanley Park, of damaged homes and even lost lives as storms rage. Meanwhile, it's warm enough to go jogging in Winterpeg.

These recent realities might even combine with the images of such meteorological horrors as hurricane Katrina; raging forest fires and retreating ice caps.

Could it be that awareness is rising because it's a little harder to ignore Nature when she's knocking on your door? So many of us now seem to be reflecting - is this climate change?



So is it? The question usually elicits some colourful discussion where strong routes for escape seem to be:

1. It can't be proved that this is climate change so therefore it is not.
2. These climate changes are part of a natural cycle therefore it is not the fault of humans nor is there *anything* we can do.
3. Even if it were the fault of humans, we will find a solution so it doesn't matter.
4. Events like the increases in deserts and reductions in ice flows are mere anomalies and not indicative of a bigger climate trend.
5. Nothing I can do will make a difference one way or the other anyway.
6. And then there's the; "It's God's will."

I can't address the latter since it is based on faith. However, to reflect on the further arguments, I understand that in this age of internet, electronic gadgetry and media superiority, we have come to believe that human

ingenuity will answer every question and find every solution. Of course, neither is true. Nature does not lend itself well to controlled experiments. She is not a test tube where conditions can be isolated leaving only one variable for study at a time. Hence, it may be impossible to know exactly to what extent we humans are having an impact on the Earth's climate. It may also be impossible to know how much these weather events are human-influenced verses the natural cycling of Nature.

But - get real! This does not mean that there isn't scientific certainty that there is a human influence on the climate! Of course there is. So many cars, such a strong reliance on fossil fuels, such indiscriminate consumption, so much concrete and asphalt – it is impossible that we are not having an impact on how heat is distributed on fair Earth.

It is a momentous development that Canadians now appear to be embracing precaution; erring on the side of caution; wanting our grandchildren to know the Canada as we did and thereby trading in escapist thinking for the empowerment to make a difference.

It can't stop at letting our politicians know that we want them to make the environment a priority. Political policy has a shelf life of about 4 years and, as entertaining as it is to now see politicians jockeying to appear the most environmentally conscious, we must embrace our power as individuals. As individuals we may be responsible for 25% of Canada's greenhouse gases. That's around 5 tonnes of greenhouse gases annually; the equivalent mass of an elephant per person (source: One Tonne Challenge).

Hurrah! Each of us can therefore make a positive difference with *minimal inconvenience* - drive less / walk more; turn off the lights; buy energy-efficient appliances; wear a sweater; shorten your shower; think before you consume and – save money as a result.

Yes, power off and power to an increasing number of Canadians. Many are dusting themselves off after the storms and are positively impacting the wind of change.

For more information on small, daily changes that make a big difference, see www.seedsfoundation.ca/otc/ and www.econauts.org "Helping the Whales."

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