

# Ecology & Action

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Lizz Miles (she/her) is an artist based in Dartmouth, N.S. Through her paintings, Lizz highlights everyday beauty using light, colour and shape to make the small and forgotten details of life more noticeable. Lizz loves to be playful within her art practice and enjoys creating art that feels sentimental and nostalgic. Find her work on Instagram @lizzmiles\_ art and at lizzmiles.com.

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## Ecology Action Centre

*Ecology & Action* is published two times a year by the Ecology Action Centre (EAC), a charitable organization (PM Registration # 40050204).

The EAC is a member-based environmental charity in Nova Scotia / Mi'kma'ki. We take leadership on critical environmental issues from biodiversity protection to climate change to environmental justice. We are grounded in community and a strong voice and watchdog for our environment. We work to catalyze change through policy advocacy, community development and building awareness. We take a holistic approach to the environment and our economy to create a just and sustainable society. Views expressed in *Ecology & Action* are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent the EAC or its supporters.

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# Letter from the Centre

## WE LOVE HEARING FROM YOU! EMAIL YOUR THOUGHTS TO [MAGAZINE@ECOLOGYACTION.CA](mailto:MAGAZINE@ECOLOGYACTION.CA)

Art can be both a celebration of our environment and a tool for change. In this magazine issue, we look at art and the environment – together. You'll find articles about Mi'kmaw artists drawing inspiration from nature, how poetry by Mary Oliver prompts a reflection of our relationship with the environment and how climate fiction can assuage despair and grief.

In addition to nourishing our spirits, art is a driver for change. This issue also includes articles about a collective of painters raising awareness about the need to protect a wild area in Halifax, how activism manifests through posters at climate strikes and how an ancient Indian dance form tells stories that deepen our connection with nature.

The history and advocacy of the Ecology Action Centre are interwoven with art. Visit our office and you'll see bright lawn signs, designed by local artists, for various campaigns. Our community boardroom is adorned with a beautiful Jeff Domm painting of some of Nova Scotia's threatened and endangered animal species. Just down the street there's a mural

titled *Respect the Sun* by Lorne Julien from *50 Things*, our 50th birthday collaboration with Zuppa Theatre Co. in 2021.

Over the years we've used creative and theatrical stunts to make a point – like the time we made a red carpet of pollution out of ocean plastics to greet delegates to the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, or when we held a Forest Funeral march, complete with pallbearers and a casket of branches. Our former environmental theatre troupe, Hemlock Circus, performed entertaining and educational plays in schools and at protests. Back in the day we even brought a giant papier mâché toilet to the Halifax waterfront during tourist season to draw attention to raw sewage being dumped in the harbour.

Artistic pursuits can be an escape, a balm or a way to spark action. In turbulent times, creative expression – through writing, song, poetry, dance, film, photography and much more – remains essential to our humanity and inseparable from the environment around us.

## LEAVE A LASTING IMPACT

Make a legacy gift to the Ecology Action Centre



When you leave a gift to the EAC in your will, your commitment to support environmental protection beyond your lifetime ensures that we can keep our voice independent and strong for years to come. Use your legacy to build a sustainable and equitable future for all.

To discuss your lasting impact, please contact, Nancy Anningson at (902) 429-2202 ext. 114 or [nancy.anningson@ecologyaction.ca](mailto:nancy.anningson@ecologyaction.ca).



## Advocate

There are many reasons why we are located in Atlantic Canada, but the greatest reason is simply that **WE LOVE IT HERE**. We strive to make our home a better place for ourselves and our children, as we pursue economic growth, social progress, and environment protection in a sustainable manner.

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# From Affect to Effect: ART, ECOLOGY AND ACTIVISM AT SANDY LAKE

by SYDNEE BLUM /// EAC Volunteer

A painting of a previously fire-swept forest.  
COURTESY Jeremy Vaughan

Just off the Hammonds Plains Road in Kwipek/Bedford is a little-known area that has been fighting for over 50 years to be recognized as a regional park. Sandy Lake and the surrounding Sackville River forest were initially earmarked for designation in 1971, but have remained in limbo despite fervent advocacy. A patchwork of municipally-, provincially-, and privately-owned land, the Sandy Lake-Sackville River area boasts ecologically intact ecosystems hosting diverse, endangered wildlife and significant old-growth forest stands. While some of this area is now protected parkland, the Provincial Housing Task Force has designated much of the remaining old-growth forest west of Sandy Lake to be fast-tracked for development.

Local artists, activists and ecologists are coming together to resist the threat of development – to highlight the area’s natural beauty and ecological significance, and find new ways to fight for its continued

**Syd** (she/they) is a community and union organizer with a background in ecology and oceanography. When she’s not writing a strongly worded letter to city hall, you can find them in the pool at the Y or down at the water watching seagulls.

existence. One of these initiatives, the Sandy Lake Artists’ Collective, demonstrates how local artists can advocate for the preservation of urban wild spaces like Sandy Lake through their work.

Karen McKendry, an ecologist and member of the Sandy Lack-Sackville River Regional Park Coalition, has been working with the Sandy Lake Coalition and the Ecology Action Centre for five years. As a trail runner and naturalist, she appreciated Sandy Lake even before joining the Save Sandy Lake campaign.

McKendry says the Sandy Lake area is an exceptional place from a conservation perspective and a regionally important biodiversity corridor.

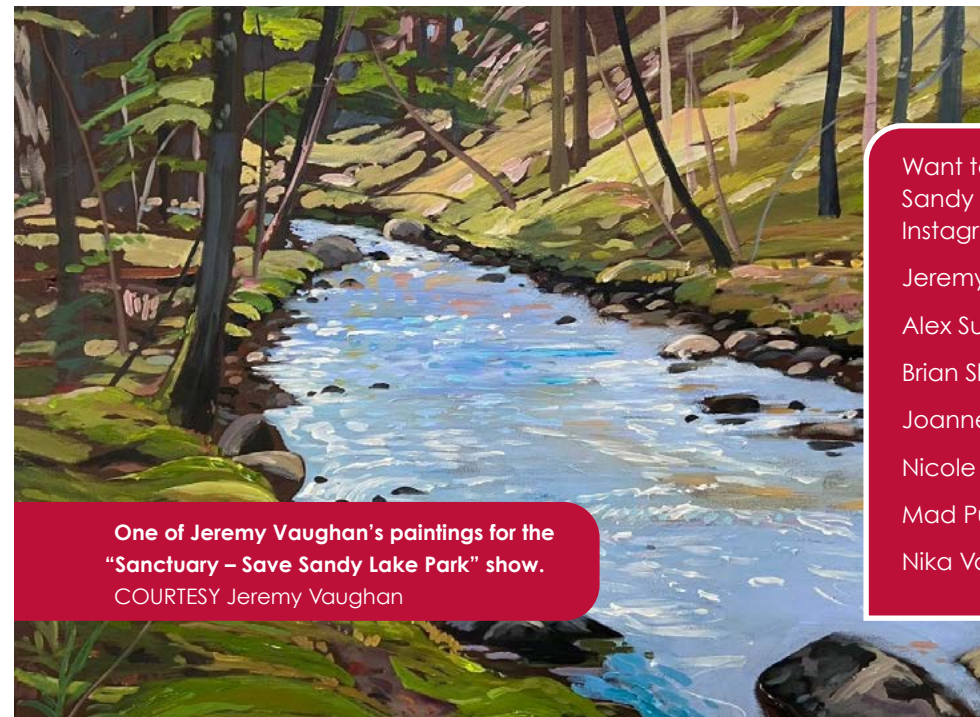
“It has a diversity of ecosystems really close together, and because it’s not been disturbed for a long time, it has these really rare elements to it; it has old-growth forests more than 125 years old in some spots. Less than one per cent of Nova Scotia’s forest is old growth at this point. So these final stands that remain are amazing. And it has 15 different endangered, threatened and vulnerable species; meaning, remarkably, even though those populations are down at dangerously low levels they still find everything they need to live at Sandy Lake. And all of those things are fairly accessible.”

McKendry sees a future where these spaces are integrated fully into the city: “It’s a large wild area and it’s still connected to other large wild areas. We need to keep it intact for wildlife movement through the city, and for all of the ecosystem services that that wildlife provides: pollinating our plants, and cleaning our waters, and capturing carbon. If something were to happen to Sandy Lake, it has reverberations for the areas around it as well.”

As organizing efforts to protect the Sandy Lake-Sackville River area intensify, the integration of art and environmental activism is emerging as a powerful method to raise awareness and galvanize support for the campaign. Like activism, art has the capacity to evoke emotion and offer fresh perspectives on familiar places. The Sandy Lake Artists’ Collective has ventured twice to the lake for open-air painting sessions to capture the area’s beauty. Supported by the Secord Gallery in Kjiptuk/Halifax, the seven artists showcased their works to raise awareness and funds for the fight to preserve the Sandy Lake-Sackville River area. Jeremy Vaughan, an artist and key organizer, says this experience opened his eyes to what treasures Sandy Lake and all the wild spaces around Halifax are.

“Four or five summers ago I swam nearly every warm day at Purcells Pond, and I had a kind of water epiphany,” says Vaughan. “I started to think and feel that water was a living entity and that it was such a wonderful thing to connect with and an amazing resource to have areas like Sandy Lake, and the lakes that I love to swim in, so close to the city.”

He says this feeling influences the way he approaches capturing landscapes in his paintings. “The connection that I feel when I go on hikes along the ocean, and I go a lot, feels similar to swimming, where the ocean wind can just lift your spirits and diminish your anxiety. And so for me, sharing that connection, I hope that I’m honouring the local wild areas by putting a spotlight on them and trying to make images that will resonate with other people too.”



One of Jeremy Vaughan’s paintings for the “Sanctuary – Save Sandy Lake Park” show.  
COURTESY Jeremy Vaughan

## ACTION TEXT

Write your elected officials and take action to Save Sandy Lake by visiting [sandylakecoalition.ca/take-action](https://sandylakecoalition.ca/take-action).

“In my art, I’m trying to get really, really close to the things that I paint. I feel like by bringing the beauty of what’s left of the wild areas around Halifax into the city in paintings and in art, it’s a window for people to appreciate a place.”

Vaughan says this relationship with nature influences his art, but also his desire to help protect these wild spaces. “Over years of experiencing nature firsthand, I have gotten a more intimate understanding of a kinship with the wild, how it heals, sustains and offers gifts for free. I feel worry, sorrow and love at the same time; for the Earth and my local favourite places. Folks need to recognize that nature is our close family. If we could mourn the loss of biodiversity and wild places as we would a dear, dear family member, we would be well served.”

Vaughan says the collective raised around \$5,000 at the “Sanctuary – Save Sandy Lake Park” show. “I knew that the people who love the area would put the money to good use. And I was just thinking as well how proud I would feel if I played a small part in helping to move the conversation towards saving that area,” he said. “So much of Nova Scotia has already been mined for its resources, but there’s so much potential left with just a few extra parks. Halifax has a chance to do something right that so many other urban centres have gotten wrong; you can only develop a treasure like Sandy Lake once. And once it’s gone, it’s gone. You can’t recreate it.”

Want to learn more about the Sanctuary – Save Sandy Lake Park artists? Check them out on Instagram:

Jeremy Vaughan - [@jeremyvaughan76](https://www.instagram.com/jeremyvaughan76)

Alex Sutcliffe - [@sutcliffe](https://www.instagram.com/sutcliffe)

Brian Sloan - [@line\\_and\\_tone](https://www.instagram.com/line_and_tone)

Joanne ManLennan - [@joannemaclennanart](https://www.instagram.com/joannemaclennanart)

Nicole Well - [@nicolewellsfineart](https://www.instagram.com/nicolewellsfineart)

Mad Putnam - [@madeleineputnam](https://www.instagram.com/madeleineputnam)

Nika Vaughan - [@nikavaughanart](https://www.instagram.com/nikavaughanart)



# Two Nature Artists in Mi'kma'ki/Nova Scotia

by MARY WOODBURY /// EAC Volunteer

## Tiffany Morris

I met Tiffany when her most recent swampcore novel, *Green Fuse Burning*, was published. After quickly devouring the book and learning that the Ecology Action Centre's spring magazine would focus on art and environment, I chatted with Tiffany to learn more. Besides *Green Fuse Burning*, she is the author of the Elgin Award-winning horror poetry collection *Elegies of Rotting Stars* (Nictitating Books, 2022). Her work has appeared in the Indigenous horror anthology *Never Whistle At Night* (Vintage Books) as well as in *Nightmare Magazine*, *Uncanny Magazine* and *Apex Magazine*, among others. She earned an MA in English with a focus on Indigenous futurisms and apocalyptic literature.

Tiffany is a firm believer in the Land Back movement. She told me, "As an L'nu'skw (Mi'kmaw woman), land is everything. I

**Mary** (she/her) is an author and localization specialist residing in the outskirts of Kijipuktuk/Halifax. She likes to hike, jog and garden. She also curates [Dragonfly.eco](http://Dragonfly.eco), a site dedicated to rewilding fiction.

feel very privileged to live in the place of my ancestors and to walk on the same land they did, even if it looks quite different than it did throughout their lifetimes." She holds the sacredness of the land close and loves to explore the many forests, waters and wild places of Nova Scotia. Tiffany finds special connections in places that feel ancient and unknowable. While some of the writing is apocalyptic – stemming from frustrations of oppression, alienation and exploitation – her prose also explores preservation of the ecological health of land and waters, and how bonding with nature increases joy.

*Green Fuse Burning*, for instance, was perplexing because, even though I'd never met Tiffany face-to-face, I recognized the natural habitat in the novel and appreciated the ecological weirdness (some might say horror) of it. One of my favorite characters was Lichen Woman. I hesitate to say more due to spoilers (read the book!). Tiffany explained to me how many people fail to live with considerations of land, and I agree. Every day, the world becomes stranger and more horrific due to the climate crisis and the denial and avoidance of how we should mitigate it. The "ecological weird" is a literary mode that can represent the uncanniness of climate change while opening the mind to new ways of thinking about transformation, appreciation and preservation of the natural world.

Tiffany's writing in *Green Fuse Burning* is highly creative and suspenseful, and connects readers to nature, environment and art. The same can be said about her short story "Night in the Chrysalis" in the recently published Indigenous anthology *Never Whistle at Night*. *Green Fuse Burning* is about an artist named Rita, and many chapters begin with an intriguing description of her artwork. These descriptions are visually rich because in her spare time Tiffany creates graphic and collage work, pastels and mixed-media photomontage paintings. Learn more about Tiffany and where to buy her books at [tiffmorris.com](http://tiffmorris.com).

## Quentin Little Wolf Syliboy

I first learned of Quentin Syliboy's art when my workplace did a spotlight on him. As he painted, he shared what motivated him to create. At age 28, he lost his mother unexpectedly. In her youth, she was forced into a residential school. Deciding that life is too short, Quentin began a personal journey to learn more about his culture. He paired that journey with his love for local nature. He developed his own unique style, tying ancestral art styles with modern techniques and influences.

To witness Quentin paint is moving. Tears formed in my eyes as he painted a hummingbird, bee, raven and more. It's not just the breathtaking beauty and style of each painting. Quentin shared personal, evocative stories as he worked. Many of these creatures are symbolic of certain Indigenous stories. The hummingbird is said to be the physical manifestation of a lost loved one. If you see one, you stop what you're doing, cherish that moment and think of that person. One story says the raven transformed the most beautiful flower into a hummingbird and instructed him to deliver a message to all the other flowers. It's why we observe hummingbirds quickly flying from flower to flower, whispering their thanks for making the world more beautiful. Quentin told me that hummingbirds and lupins rank among his favourites.

"Elegantly Departed" (of a queen bee) is an iconic work. This art represents the strength, resiliency and wisdom of Indigenous women. Quentin explained, "It's also a message of humanity's dependence on Mother Earth. And a beacon of hope. It reflects the hope that we can reconcile with each other as humans, and indeed with all life." On his Facebook page, he points out that the red honeycombs represent the Red Dress movement for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Blue ghost colours stand for those we've already lost. The queen bee's tear-filled eyes depict a mother's sadness for the loss. Bees are also at risk due to climate change. The multilayered symbolism within Quentin's art merges nature and native culture into potent messages – not just of loss and memory but of moving forward with strong, resilient actions.

Quentin's journey into painting was a positive experience. He's been a full-time artist for 13 years. He's also CEO of the non-profit Obsidian Studios: Cultural Learning Program, whose aim is to provide unique learning experiences through art. Participants use art as therapy by creating works that tell meaningful stories from their lives. Since 2015 the organization has raised over \$80,000 to bring the program to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. If that wasn't enough, Quentin also volunteers. He's helped the SPCA for over a decade. For over three years, he's developed art workshops for the East Hants community. Learn more at Quentin's [Facebook page](#) where you can contact him directly if you'd like to buy a painting.



"Elegantly Departed" represents the strength, resiliency and wisdom of Indigenous women. COURTESY Quentin Syliboy  
Inset: The book cover of *Green Fuse Burning*. COURTESY Stelliform Press

A collection of posters lie stacked on top of each other at Grande Parade, Halifax.

PHOTO: Nicole Toth

# There is No Planet B: PROTEST SIGNS AND ART IN THE CLIMATE STRIKE MOVEMENT

by **NICOLE TOTH** /// EAC Volunteer

The photos that emerged from the civil rights movement in the United States, the posters that protested apartheid in South Africa or the street art used to spread anti-regime messages during the Arab Springs are some of the most iconic examples of art's connection to political movements. Art is often found alongside societal progress because of its unparalleled ability to raise awareness and unite people around a common goal. Today, we can see this at work in relation to the climate crisis and the large youth-led school strikes known as Fridays for Future. Each September the streets of downtown Halifax become flooded with posters, photographers and the beat of marching drums. The use of art at Halifax's School Strike for Climate provides citizens with multiple ways to speak up about climate justice and inspire others to do the same.

Eye-catching posters are a great way to attract attention, and their very creation is often one of the first points of engagement many people have with the climate strikes. Community poster making workshops, for example, are great opportunities for people to reflect, learn and come together before the strike. Above all, artistic expression offers each strike goer, especially youth, a unique platform to directly advocate for what's most important to them. In essence,

**Nicole** (she/her) is a Dalhousie graduate in law and philosophy. Her interests revolve around reading, writing and spending time outdoors.

## TAKE ACTION

Follow [@schoolstrike4climatehfx](https://www.instagram.com/schoolstrike4climatehfx) on Instagram and stay tuned for opportunities to join in the movement.

the accessible and engaging nature of art makes it the perfect tool for raising public awareness and urging policy-makers to act.

Moreover, the ability of art to bring communities together and inspire collective action makes it one of our most important allies when advocating for climate justice. Even from their front steps, someone who may have doubts about climate change could be moved by the passion and care evident in the artwork passing them by. Likewise, poems recited by high school students demanding a brighter future might prompt one to consider their role in ensuring a livable planet for their own family. Meaningful art has this power, often evoking strong emotions, introspection and connection between people. Through these qualities and more, art unites people, regardless of age, race, class or political affiliation, in ways that little else can.

The creativity demonstrated at the Halifax climate strikes creates a joyous and inspirational atmosphere that leaves a lasting impression on those involved and in the minds of policy-makers. This annual event showcases just a few of the ways that art inspires people to take action, to hope and to find joy amidst an environmental crisis. On any scale, artistic endeavors support inclusive activism and the pursuit of an equitable future as we face the climate crisis together.

# You Do Not Have to Be Good: CLIMATE GRIEF AND THE POETRY OF MARY OLIVER

by **KIT TYMOSHUK** /// EAC Volunteer

The sunrise over a pond, somewhere in Montana.  
PHOTO: Kit Tymoshuk

Last summer I lived where the sun never set. I spent my days canoeing through weedy streams covered in mud and mosquito bites. I swam in the lake with new friends, I planted tomatoes in my garden, I wandered around the pond near town. I choked through an Air Quality Index of 10+ for weeks when the forests around Inuvik, N.W.T., caught fire. Trying to sleep in an N95 mask, I lay awake mourning the burning trees and our burning planet. When it finally rained, I revelled in the lush and brilliant joy of sitting in a bed of moss, picking blueberries until my fingers were stained purple. To have had a place of refuge taken from me so quickly, so easily, made climate change brutally real, and every moment outside priceless.

**Kit** (they/them) is an aspiring kelp farmer and ceramicist currently working towards their Masters of Oceanography at Dalhousie. Among other things, they love smiley fries, gardening and their dog, Pip.

"I am replete, supine, finished, filled to the last edges with an immobilising happiness. And is this not also terrible? Is this not also frightening?"

— (Upstream, p.137)

As the effects of climate change threaten to drastically change our planet, I find myself turning to Mary Oliver's poetry to soothe my climate grief. She wrote simply about her own walks in the woods, her quiet observations of the natural world. She understood how to look outside yourself at the endless cycling of dead and living things and the wonder and pain of loving something ephemeral.

"Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.  
Meanwhile the world goes on.  
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain  
are moving across the landscapes,  
over the prairies and the deep trees,  
the mountains and the rivers."  
— (Wild Geese)

Grief and love are inextricably linked together. How do we find joy in loving something that could disappear, in loving a world that is tipping further towards a precipice from which we cannot return? We love because of loss, not in spite of it. Through her constant wanderings and observations, Oliver weaved connections between herself and the living things she wrote about. Through connection there is mutual acknowledgement of pain; her poetry is a vessel for this. We can accept that grief is inevitable (always), but instead of fearing it, shape it into something resilient and hopeful.

"To live in this world  
you must be able  
to do three things:  
to love what is mortal;  
to hold it  
against your bones knowing  
your own life depends on it;  
and, when the time comes to let it go,  
to let it go."  
— (In Blackwater Woods)

Oliver's poetry has softened my grief in many ways, allowing me to feel deeper empathy for myself and the world around me. I grieve the forests we lose to fires, love the ones we still have left, and hope for new ones to grow. I find joy in my time outside, in the climate movement, and still push for more. Because there is so much to be done; we just need to love enough to believe the work we are doing is worth it.

"Look, I want to love this world  
as though it's the last chance I'm ever going to get  
to be alive  
and know it."  
— (October)

Lisa Phinney Langley performing in the Sable Ocean Dance Project.  
PHOTO: Kevin MacCormack/  
Mocean Dance

# Connecting the Dots:

## USING DANCE TO COMMUNICATE ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

by SARAH MOORE /// EAC Staff

It was an early summer morning, the blue-purple light before sunrise illuminating the mist drifting above a lake in Kejimikujik National Park. Lisa Phinney Langley was there working for Environment Canada, studying how mercury moved through the land, water and air.

As she rose to check her equipment, she heard loons calling to each other – and not just one pair, which is usually all you will see nesting on a small lake, but rather nine individuals. Their short, soft hoots and echoing wails resonated through the mist. “It was breathtakingly beautiful. I’d never seen so many loons together before,” says Phinney Langley, currently the artistic director of Phin Performing Arts. What she saw and heard was akin to a social scene for single loons. She says this remarkable experience not only piqued her interest in the social behaviours of loons, but then caused her to reflect on how mercury, which she had been studying, might affect them.

That reality is a far cry from the beautiful chorus she had heard across the lake. Among other effects, mercury causes blindness and makes the birds over-preen their feathers, reducing the survival rate of their offspring.

Inspired and concerned, Phinney Langley took what she learned and created two dance pieces: *Gavia* (2007), a solo performance, and *Analogy for Solid Bones* (2009), a piece with seven dancers that illustrated the plight of the loons through lyrical movement. *A review for Analogy for Solid Bones* by Sue Carter Finn in *The Coast* contains Phinney Langley’s all-time favourite quote: “Conservationists take note: If you want people to pay attention, partner with an artist.” This, Phinney Langley considered her highest praise. She says her audience “may never have read about mercury in the environment from a scientific paper but we brought it to the stage. It reaches a different audience ... on a level that engages their action, not just their brain.”

## Fundamental similarities

On the surface, “art” and “science” are distinct. One might even consider them incompatible disciplines that have little to offer each other. One is creative, emotional, expressive; the other analytical, precise, methodical. Phinney Langley, however, hasn’t seen it that way in a long time – not since she attended the Dance Arts Institute, then called the School of Toronto Dance Theatre. “I was so inspired and excited by ... what we were developing as improv artists; this sort of way of exploring and changing and following through with an idea and then changing the impulse and seeing where that leads,” she recalls.

At the same time, she was conducting environmental research, drawing on her undergraduate degree in physics. She was struck by the scientific process of exploring different trends and relationships often leading to interesting tangents. “The way [my supervisor] led me to explore the data was so similar to the way that we were exploring movement,” Phinney Langley says. That connection inspired her to later turn her master’s degree thesis in atmospheric physics, which was about phytoplankton and climate feedback cycles in the ocean, into a dance.

More recently, Phinney Langley is developing a workshop titled *Improvisation for Scientists and Researchers*, drawing on the similarities at the core of artistic and environmental pursuits. She says, “Artists are sensitive; we pay attention to those around us, the connections we see, the beauty around us. For those who care about the environment it’s the same thing – we care, we respect our environment, the people around us. I think in cultivating mindfulness and a culture of care, we cultivate both artistic expression and a respect for the environment.”

## Plastic pollution and education

That mindfulness and curiosity was exactly what the Sable Island Institute and Mocean Dance aimed to cultivate with the Sable Ocean Dance Project.

Ocean plastic pollution is ubiquitous and deadly. **Between 1 and 2 million tonnes** of plastic enter our oceans annually – a huge number that is, nonetheless, still only a small fraction, 0.5 per cent, of all plastic waste produced in a year. This debris escapes in our waterways, swirling through currents to make its way to the ocean, where it kills marine mammals, fish, turtles and seabirds.

On Sable Island, a crescent-shaped sliver 175 kilometres off the coast of Nova Scotia, **plastics have been found in the stomachs of seabirds**. Waves and wind carry debris ashore, scattering it among white sand dunes and tufts of green beach grass – and making movement a natural way to communicate the issue of ocean plastics to the public.

With the Sable Ocean Dance Project, performers utilized debris washed up on the shores of Sable Island and collected by Zoe Lucas, president of the Sable Island Institute. In May 2023, they held **engagement sessions in schools**, transforming a gym into

## TAKE ACTION

Donate to the Sable Island Institute at [sableislandinstitute.org/donate](https://sableislandinstitute.org/donate). Look for sessions of the Sable Island Dance Project in fall 2024!

a meandering pathway framed by all manner of fraying ropes, colourful bags and tattered nets. One performer, holding a buoy like a lantern, guided students through the scene as another started weaving a narrative: “Once upon a time in M’ikma’ki...” The layout of the debris and the animation of pieces conveyed the motion of winds and ocean currents distributing its deadly effects.

“It was very powerful,” says Phinney Langley, one of the creative collaborators for the project. “Just the sheer volume of plastics that were laid out, I think that made a big impression.”

## Understanding expands

Peer-reviewed scientific papers, dances or paintings are all forms of storytelling. How the ideas are received, and who is there to listen, might differ. “Not everyone reads scientific papers, and those who do are generally already well-informed about the issue they are reading,” says Phinney Langley. “Bringing the issues to the stage or studio or gallery reaches a new, perhaps broader audience ... not through facts and graphs but through an experience they can connect with, something that resonates, brings up memories, connections and ideas for them.”

Rather than engaging the analytical part of the brain, “art can get at the heart, make broad connections, and illustrate an issue from an emotional perspective,” she says. “Suddenly your understanding of the work expands that much more.” Indeed, events that elicit an emotional response **are remembered more clearly, accurately and for longer periods of time than those lacking an emotional reaction**.

“We can appreciate facts, but I think they resonate better when paired with emotion or spirituality or memory,” says Phinney Langley. “Perhaps that leads us toward care, and towards action.”

Sarah (she/her) is a communications officer with the Ecology Action Centre.

# A Night with the Woods:

## A SHORT STORY

by ZONGHUA AI /// EAC Volunteer

Fishing Cove, Unama'ki/Cape Breton. The place where the story happened.

PHOTO: Zonghua Ai

My walk takes me two hours downhill from the highway through the woods. At the tree's opening, a stream's gurgle molts into a sheet of serene light, feeding into the lullaby of the ocean, eventually melting into the orange semi-sphere on the horizon. I have been here several times before, each time having the whole view to myself. Today, however, there seem to be guests. No, not guests – the traditional residents; I recognize a few melodic fragments of their conversation, from years of desperately trying to learn the language of this land.

**Zonghua** (they/them) is a phytochemist and will never shut up about plants and mushrooms. From Zonghua's MSc project, they learned the importance of the relationship between plant relatives and their Indigenous names. Zonghua is learning L'nui'simk (the Mi'kmaw language) from their fiancé, as well as from classes offered through university

“Hey, who are you?” A young voice pierces through my internal monologue. I must have visibly startled, as now there is a huge grin on the young face.

“I, uh, my name is Dancing-crane Cobra-lily, *Arisaema heterophyllum*. Just, uh, call me Cobra... I guess.” I regret it as the words leave my tongue. What a weird name! Sounds long, funny, they're not going to pronounce it correctly. They will laugh, I will have to stand here awkwardly smiling through the whole thing. I am a foreigner stepping onto another land; now the land stares at me curiously, swallowing me deep into their eyes.

“Ari...Arisaema...Oh! You're a Jack-in-the-pulpit! Jack-in-the-pulpit! I knew it! You have the same wiggly shaped flower!” A flickering voice, from a slim man, gabbles out words as fast as a machine gun.

“Spadix, that 'flower' thing is called.” I spit out some textbook reflexively; however, a sense of alienness quickly stained my voice

timid. “But, um, you know someone who is similar – do they grow up here with you?”

“Of cour-” “No they grow in YOUR nation, by the Great Lakes, dude,” A tall guy walks toward us while explaining, “they're not all that common here in the Maritimes. However, there are some traditional usages about Jack-in-the-pulpit by L'nu'k, so that means they could have grown here, you know, like Sipekn-”

DOON! A drum quiets everyone in an instant. A strong-looking man with a *Usnea* beard, holding his drumstick like a war club, clears his throat: “Pjila'si. Welcome. We are going to drum together tonight. But before that, come and grab food!”

I finally have some breathing room to observe. Around the fire are four men. The youngest, Trembling Aspen *Populus tremuloides*, is already devouring his salmon and chanterelles. The slim and agile Spreading Dogbane *Apocynum androsaemifolium* from the Great Lakes, is talking at the scholar-looking yet quirky Sugar Maple *Acer saccharum*, who in turn is gazing eagerly at the wild berry jam still simmering on the fire. The stoic, bearded chef Red Spruce *Picea rubens*, is serving everyone; “That includes you, tu's. Come and eat! What's your name again?”

“Dancing-crane Cobra-lily.” I reply, “That is what I am called in the common language; my name means 'southern star' in my mother tongue. I came from the land of the Tea plant.” I am soaked in the surprise of those words flowing effortlessly out of my mouth. But the drum has spoken, and I am now sitting in a drumming circle.

“Here, try it.” The tall man Sugar Maple stabs a drumstick between my eyebrows. I take the drumstick and uncross my eyes. The drumstick is made from a lightweight smooth-barked branch, and a puffy moose leather head that smells a hint of goat. Maple sits beside me, “I made this drumstick! You can borrow it.” “Thank you! Is it maple wood?” I feel a bit silly asking that. “It is! Good eyes. A Norway Maple keeps bugging me so I asked my friend Ewlamns to take care of him.”

Meanwhile, Aspen and Dogbane are immersed in a singing battle. Dogbane's voice is sharp but raspy, like vines crawling back after a wildfire. The fire that once scorched through his past sowed resiliency in his heart. Aspen's voice is transparent, crispy, sometimes even seems fragile – like lake ice cracking up hearing the first whisper of spring. His face is bright red, light in his eyes. Passion permeates from their song, glowing as stars above us.

“I sing better, right?” Confidence shines in those young bright eyes. “Yeah, who has better singing skills?” The rough voice smiled mischievously. “Ooor, how about we call on our respectful 'judge' for a song?” Maple jumps in with an even bigger smile. My eyes fumble onto Spruce's face, asking for help. “Sing,” he says in a motherly tone, “we will teach you.”

The song circled eight times before I gathered enough strength to make a sound. I cover my voice in the group, lower my pitch so it

### TAKE ACTION

Learn about which traditional territories you live on at [native-land.ca](http://native-land.ca), and check out [L'nui'suti: the Mi'kmaw Language App](#) to learn the Mi'kmaw names for the plants and animals in your local ecosystems.

won't poke through a comforting barrier. Should I initiate the solo part like the others have? The song has been thrown in the circle for so many rounds. Will it never end if I don't try?

I raised my voice and my power squeezing the drumstick. “WEJIKTA-”

Suddenly Aspen bursts out laughing. I freeze instantly, and a wave of embarrassment consumes me.

“Aspen, be nice to our guest. Southern star, it's 'wejkwita'jik'. Let's try again.”

I smiled at Spruce. The drum speaks again. I take a huge deep breath –

“WIGGLY-”

I start to laugh, over the silliest mistake my panicked brain spat out. Aspen starts to laugh too. All of us laugh, uncontrollably. Maple is roaring up to the Milky Way, Dogbane is wheezing like a whistle, while Aspen and I are rolling on the ground, snorting, bubbling out of our noses. Even Spruce gets a smile on his bark-hard face. “We are not laughing at you,” he stares lovingly into the fire, “we are laughing with you. Hope you enjoy our songs.”

How many hours did we sing through? The night full of laughter slipped away in a blink. When the first drop of fish-belly color smears across the border of sky and ocean, my eyes are allured by a pod of pilot whales dancing in the dawn. “If,” a deep voice rises behind me, “if only humans ever see us as equal, maybe they will hesitate for a heartbeat before clear-cutting us away.”

Wondering which of my new friends gifted us the wise words, I turned around to seek them. However, behind me there was no face or drum, only layers and layers of never-ending green folding onto a steep moose trail, reaching up the shiny home of the three-legged crow. In my grasp lies a lanky Norway Maple uprooted by wind, the last yet still green leaf covered in Tar Spot.

The story ends.



A young humpback whale rests at the surface of the Bay of Fundy. PHOTO: Nick Hawkins

# Ocean Spotlight: CONSERVATION MEDIA AS A TOOL FOR CHANGE

by PAIGE CROWELL /// EAC Volunteer

New Brunswick-based wildlife cinematographer Nick Hawkins advocates for conservation by capturing evocative visuals above and below water to spotlight species and ecosystems that viewers might not otherwise experience or appreciate.

Most recently he served as associate producer and director of photography for *Jawsome: Canada's Great White Sharks*, which premiered on CBC TV in January. However, his passion for marine life goes back to his student days. A series of what he characterizes as "unexpected twists and turns" in his career started while studying biology at the University of New Brunswick with his sights set on becoming a research scientist.

## Ocean introduction

A field course in the Bay of Fundy afforded Hawkins the chance to get out of the classroom and on the water. It allowed him to experience the Atlantic Ocean in a more personal way, broadening his view of marine careers.

"For me, it changed my life," he explains. "In all of that time studying in university, it was those six months, and really those few weeks out on the ocean, that left an impression on me and gave me the clarity to know what I wanted to do with my life."

Through his experiences in academia, Hawkins recognized a disconnect between important scientific work being published and the audiences it was reaching. He became interested in what he describes as "the idea of communicating science to the public and filling that gap."

## Media landscape

After graduating, Hawkins spent time working in Central America, making connections with local researchers and immersing himself in the flourishing field of conservation photography. He continued to adapt to the ever-evolving media landscape and progressed from shooting for small magazines to large international outlets. Hawkins' work has since been featured in *National Geographic*, *Canadian Geographic*, *BBC Wildlife Magazine* and *Canadian Wildlife Magazine*.

In the intervening years Hawkins' focus has shifted from photography to cinematography. As his career began, print media's pre-eminence was drawing to an end and the traditional magazine photo spread was no longer the holy grail. Hawkins saw an opportunity in film. He explains, "I saw that not only was there a vibrant industry, there were bigger budgets and I could do bigger

projects, but also that the media had changed for connecting with people... [film] is a really powerful storytelling medium."

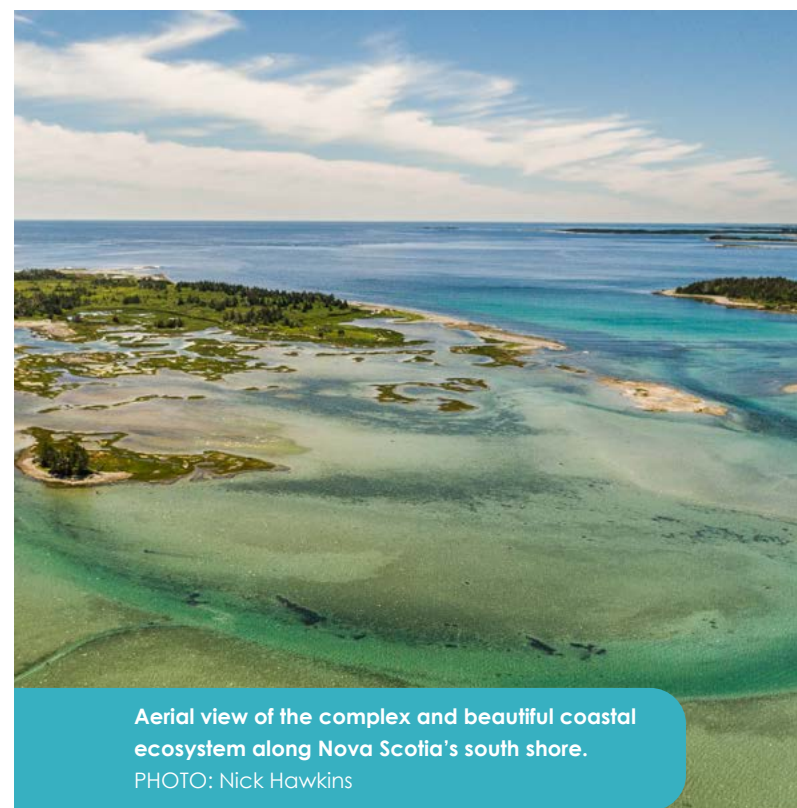
## Connecting through the lens

Understanding and valuing the world around us is paramount to prioritizing its conservation, and Hawkins' work focuses on facilitating this connection. This led him to complete the work he is most proud of to date, chronicling a rarely documented species disappearing before our eyes: the critically endangered North Atlantic right whale.

The poignant visuals Hawkins produced helped viewers relate to the unique and important lives of the individual whales featured, and to empathize with the sorrow of their loss. His work fostered an emotional connection to the whales and those working to save them, which supported shifting attitudes towards the urgency of the whales' plight and our collective responsibility to the species. This work was captured in the film *Last of the Right Whales*, which has been widely viewed locally and around the globe.

## Strategic impact

Beyond his natural curiosity, Hawkins seeks projects where he can make a strategic impact. He explains: "I try to look for things where there is great momentum by environmental organizations or conservation groups on a goal or objective, whether that's establishing a marine protected area or a shift in regulation. There are often areas that environmental organizations are doing such great work on and it gets to the level where if we just have a boost, it can be a tipping point where you can push the needle."



Aerial view of the complex and beautiful coastal ecosystem along Nova Scotia's south shore. PHOTO: Nick Hawkins



A lion's mane jellyfish drifts in the current off Nova Scotia. PHOTO: Nick Hawkins



Wildlife cinematographer Nick Hawkins. PHOTO: Tom Cheney

Effective content must also captivate. Hawkins explains: "I look for a charismatic animal that I know I can tell an interesting story about, or an ecosystem under threat, or things that haven't been filmed before." While conserving keystone species such as whales and sharks often bring additional benefits to the ecosystems that support them, Hawkins also seeks to highlight more humble subjects. "A challenge as a filmmaker and photographer is to try [...] to reveal the lives of lesser-known species, or species that are less charismatic, or are different from us."

While there is a target audience and impact for every project, recent feedback on his *Jawsome* production was particularly touching for Hawkins. He received a hand-written letter from a young shark conservation enthusiast from Alberta. "You don't need any greater review than that to know you're reaching the right audience," says Hawkins.

In reflecting on his international portfolio, Hawkins still prefers to work on the Atlantic Coast where he first connected with the aquatic world. His next adventure therefore suits him just fine, as he embarks on a multi-year television project to focus on Canada's oceans with shooting throughout Atlantic Canada. More of Hawkins' work can be seen at [nickjhawkins.com](http://nickjhawkins.com).

Paige (she/her) is a conservation biologist living and working in Halifax. In her free time, she enjoys being in and on the water.





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In their own personal ways, Richard Nickerson's clients work hard to leave the world a better place than they found it. For many clients, this means investment decisions that support companies which act in accordance to that client's values. Richard is a socially responsible investor and he supports his clients in choosing high quality investments that align with their values.

**LEARN MORE AT: [assantehydrostone.com/advisor/richard-nickerson](http://assantehydrostone.com/advisor/richard-nickerson)**



The Art Bikers and the EAC's Pop-up Bike Hub Mini offer art activities and free bike repairs.  
PHOTO: Heather Wilkinson

Art activities in the community of North Preston.  
PHOTO: Melissa Marr



### Community work

Art Bikers has had far-reaching impacts on local communities; this group has engaged with over 15,000 community members by providing art-making opportunities and events in their neighbourhoods. Through this, Art Bikers can provide both the creative materials and opportunities for families and community members who may not be able to access these experiences otherwise. Being able to engage with art is deeply important at all stages of life; making art at a young age is important for child development, and making art at an older age can help to maintain memory and coordination. For all ages, art is a creative form of self-expression that has many positive outcomes for mental health and overall well-being. Since 2007, Art Bikers has brought art-making opportunities to 52 different community groups. Details about past and future events can be found on Instagram (@artbikers) and on the Wonder'neath website.

**TAKE ACTION**

Visit [wonderneath.com](http://wonderneath.com) for more information about art programming in your community. Monetary donations to support Wonder'neath and the Art Bikers can be transferred to [donate@wonderneath.com](mailto:donate@wonderneath.com) or made by cheque or direct deposit. Art material donations are also accepted to support the Wonder'neath resource library. Visit the website for how to donate!

# Art Bikers:

## MAKING ART AND NATURE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

by **KENDRA MAINPRIZE** /// EAC Volunteer

In a world where we often find ourselves isolated by stress, financial worries and the demands of modern life, Wonder'neath's Art Bikers program creates vibrant communal spaces and opportunities for communities to connect with art, nature and sustainability.

**Kendra** (she/her) is a student currently finishing her undergraduate degree in marine biology. She loves writing about science and nature, as well as spending time outdoors and by the ocean.

### Art Bikers

Art Bikers is a program that has been running in Kjiptuk/Halifax since 2007 that combines art with biking. The Art Bikers use bicycles with trailers to travel to communities in the Halifax Regional Municipality and provide accessible, free art programming. Started by the 4Cs Foundation, Art Bikers was fully transferred to Wonder'neath Art Society in May 2020, another organization working to support art and artists at the community level.



Making art in North Grove in 2023.  
PHOTO: Taz Pham

### Connecting with nature

There is a close tie between art and nature, and Art Bikers emphasizes this through events that focus on sustainability and connections with nature. Past events include activities such as birdhouse painting, clothing care and repair projects and pop-up art activities with a bike hub for bike repairs. Many of these workshops and events are based on sustainability through improving the longevity of bikes and clothing, and engaging with plants, animals and materials found in nature. Through providing opportunities for bike repairs – and leading by example with their travelling bike trailer – Art Bikers also helps community members utilize sustainable forms of transportation. Additionally, through holding many events in public green spaces and parks, Art Bikers creates an opportunity for people to be outside in nature, having fun and creating art free of charge. Like art, being in nature has numerous benefits for mental and physical health. Time in nature is associated with increased happiness as well as improved mental health, better focus and lower stress.

The success of various Art Bikers initiatives highlights the benefits of combining art and the environment. Through providing opportunities for nature-based art programming, Art Bikers helps make art and nature more accessible to many communities across Halifax Regional Municipality. A guarantee of joy, creativity and fun for all participants!

# Greening the JUNOs:

## HALIFAX'S PLAN TO REDUCE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF CANADA'S LARGEST MUSIC AWARDS

by KATHERINE MARTIN /// EAC Volunteer

The **JUNO Awards** took place in Halifax this March for the first time since 2006, and local organizations banded together to reduce the environmental impacts of events and promote climate action in the music industry.

The JUNO Awards began in 1964 to recognize the talent of Canadian music artists. Since its beginning as an award ceremony, it has evolved into a weeklong festival of industry events for emerging talent and opportunities for fans to connect with artists. This year, a team of local organizations worked hard to ensure the ceremony and associated events helped promote the values of HalifACT, Halifax Regional Municipality's (HRM) climate action plan.

Music Nova Scotia, Music Declares Emergency Canada, Halifax's Environment & Climate Change Team, the Ecology Action Centre and a local sustainability committee for the JUNOs began working together in 2023 to take a more sustainable approach to the festival. In an interview with Kim Fry – a climate specialist with HRM and coordinator of Music Declares Emergency Canada – she states, “We may not have the capacity to impact the JUNOs as an organization, but as a host city we can showcase Halifax's commitment to sustainability and the HalifACT plan.”

Approximately 85 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions associated with musicians' shows arise from audience travel. To combat this problem, stakeholders worked together on numerous projects, including free transit between venues during major JUNO events, incentivizing the use of public and active transportation to shows and installing music-themed bike racks at local venues.

They also found ways to promote sustainable fashion throughout the festival. People were encouraged to donate old band t-shirts

**Katherine** (she/they) is a biology student at Dalhousie University with a passion for sustainable development and environmental health.

### TAKE ACTION

Speak with your favourite music venues and artists about the importance of supporting climate action. Instead of travelling to see big artists, spend time supporting local musicians in your area. Use public or active transportation when visiting local music venues.

and blank clothing at local record stores and music venues. These donations will be used by local artists to take a circular-economy approach to merchandising. Fashion Takes Action even created a fashion guide to promote sustainability on the red carpet.

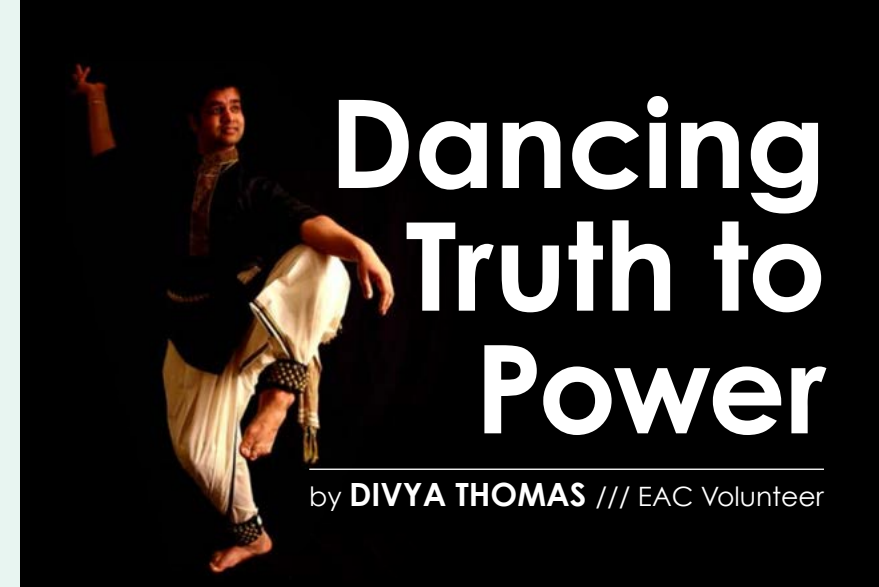
Events to promote climate action in the music industry took place throughout the city in the week leading up to the award ceremony. The goal of these initiatives was to draw attention and spark conversations about the role of the arts in addressing the climate emergency. Some highlights include:

- Climate Concert 2024 and launch of the Canadian Environmental Music Awards at the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium
- 2024 Music Climate Summit at the Halifax Central Library
- Climate Education through Music Gathering
- Climate Song Camp 2024

Music Declares Emergency Canada highlights the importance of the arts in spreading awareness about climate action. Over 7,000 artists, organizations and individuals have signed to declare a climate and ecological emergency, coining the phrase “No Music on a Dead Planet.” Their work shows the need for an intersectional, multi-disciplinary approach to addressing the climate crisis. Their work to green the 2024 JUNO Awards will set a precedent for future events in the music industry.

Music Declares Emergency Canada highlights the importance of the arts in spreading awareness about climate action

IMAGE: Music Declares Emergency Canada



# Dancing Truth to Power

by DIVYA THOMAS /// EAC Volunteer

“Bharata Natyam is a vibrant Indian classical dance style. It is believed to be over 4,000 years old. It was originally a temple dance performed for worship. It involves intricate footwork along with an extensive vocabulary of eye, neck and head movements and hand gestures. In addition to the complex technical aspect, there is an expressive and storytelling component. Once a form of worship, now Bharata Natyam is an art form that can educate and entertain new audiences, seasoned artists and dance enthusiasts alike,” says Seshakamal Iyengar.

Seshakamal is a professional Bharata Natyam dancer with over 35 years of experience. He began his tutelage in Bharata Natyam at the age of nine years old and completed his arangetram (graduation) in 1991. In Montreal, he runs his own school, Swara Kamalam, where he teaches the Mysuru style of Veena and the Pandanallur style of Bharata Natyam. Swara Kamalam also funds a dance scholarship in India, the Srinivasa Smrithi, given to underprivileged children who excel in the field of Bharata Natyam in collaboration with the Nrutya Bhushana Dance Festival of Mysuru, India.

Seshakamal tells stories about current issues, such as climate change, through this 4,000-year-old artform. He has authored and choreographed numerous performances on climate change and social issues. His key past performances include portrayals of the Bhopal Disaster, Black July and the Indian famines.

## The world's worst industrial disaster

The **Bhopal gas tragedy** is known as the world's worst industrial disaster.

“This year marks 40 years since the explosion occurred. The people of Bhopal continue to suffer generational impacts,” says Seshakamal.

**Divya** (she/her) holds a BA (hons) in political science and sustainability and a Master of Public Administration. She enjoys writing stories and poetry that explore identity and diasporic experiences.

Seshakamal has choreographed numerous performances.  
PHOTO: Amar Khoday

### TAKE ACTION

Support artistic communities in your area. Watch the film *The Railway Men* depicting the untold story of Bhopal. Acknowledge that the impact of colonialism and capitalism are integral to understanding climate justice. Make efforts to decolonize the way you engage in climate action.

Seshakamal represented the poisonous gas while dancing the truth of the 1984 Union Carbide pesticide plant explosion in Bhopal, India. The performance concluded with a representation of a seed failing to blossom in the contaminated soil.

The explosion killed 20,000 people, seriously injured 10,000 people, and disabled 20,000 people. The waterbed in Bhopal is still contaminated with over 20 known carcinogens since Dow chemicals, the owner of Union Carbide, has failed to clean the chemicals. This environmental disaster amplifies the need to protect communities in the global south from negligence, dumping and dangerous industrial projects from multinational corporations.

## Black July

Last year marked 40 years since the Black July pogrom (1983), an organized massacre on Tamil people in Sri Lanka. Seshakamal authored and choreographed a Bharata Natyam performance depicting three women's experiences of Black July.

“I wanted to portray how conflict disproportionately impacts women and girls,” says Seshakamal.

He wrote three historical fictions based on Black July. The first depicted a mother whose husband and child are taken. The second portrayed a 10-year-old girl walking to school. When she returns from school, she learns that her parents were murdered by a bomb. The third told the story of a college-aged girl waiting for her friend at the bus stop, but her friend never made it.

Seshakamal's work demonstrates that the vocabulary of Bharata Natyam is versatile enough to tell all stories. He is dancing truth to power, sharing knowledge of important events, teaching younger generations and inspiring action through performance.

# Poor Prose Muddles the Urgent Questions Posed in *The History of Bees*



The *History of Bees* asks readers to imagine futures as they might be, and to reflect upon the possibilities of change.

PHOTOS: iStock

by IAN MALLOV /// EAC Volunteer

Literature as social commentary is as old as storytelling itself. But literature dealing with the subject of environmental destruction – like the nuclear-apocalypse-themed fiction of the 1950s and '60s – has intensified as the threats have grown more dire. Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy, Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* and Ian McEwan's *Solar* are examples by prominent western writers of such speculative fiction from the early 21st century, precursors to the increasingly common climate fiction, or "cli-fi" genre of the last 10-15 years. Much of this literature is set in future, post-apocalyptic worlds where environmental catastrophe has decimated human civilization as we know it. These days, you can find cli-fi everywhere from the best-sellers section at drug stores and airports to small university literary journals.

Maja Lunde's *The History of Bees* is the first of the Oslo-based writer's planned "Climate Quartet" and fits much more within the best-seller group, having sold hundreds of thousands of copies since its publication in 2015. Since then, Lunde has released *The End of the Ocean* and *The Last Wild Horses*.

*The History of Bees* is closer to general environmental speculative fiction than cli-fi. It focuses on a specific problem – the decline of bees – that is close enough to the popular consciousness to be easily relatable, and yet specific enough to have the appeal of a niche body of knowledge. This is what drew me to the novel. I found myself fascinated by the specific, almost dystopian hierarchy of a bee colony, and by the miracles of enzymatic chemistry by which bees turn the sucrose of nectar into the concentrated glucose and fructose of honey. And more importantly, I found myself relating to a sharp anxiety that the proliferation of parasites and pesticides, habitat destruction from poor land use and climate change might destroy these crucial pollinators.

Lunde's novel weaves together three stories, set in different places and times. William Savage is a British shopkeeper and amateur naturalist in the early 1850s, depressed when his research is scorned by his mentor, Professor Rahm. George is an Ohio apiarist in 2007, trying to convince his academic-minded son to take over the farm, until his bees suddenly die from the colony collapse disorder first noted in 2007. Tao is a labourer, a "manual pollinator" in 2098 Sichuan who is doing the work that bees once did, and whose young son experiences a sudden, mysterious affliction. The novel's chapters alternate between the three stories and often end on a cliffhanger. The elegant past, present, future design and the simplicity of the plots recall Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*.

The novel is at its best when describing the particularities of beekeeping and the history of bee science. Lunde's prose here is simple and descriptive:

**"Tom lifted the box while I changed the board. Removed the old one, which was full of debris and dead bees from the winter, and put in a new, clean one. We had invested in modern bottom boards with screens and removable ventilated pollen trays last year...The air circulation improved and the cleaning was simpler."**

These interwoven plots are compelling, and to the best of my knowledge, the scientific parts are accurate. However, the complexities of the issues – of pesticides and monocrops and the trade-off between efficient land use and feeding a global population of eight billion – are not addressed. Organic farming is suggested as an answer, but not thoroughly explored.

Nonetheless, the quality of the book is often diminished by the one-dimensional characters and the quality of the prose on a sentence-by-sentence, paragraph-by-paragraph level.

William, George and Tao rarely rise above the single-use roles defined by the architecture of the plot. William and his family are what Lunde imagines citizens of the 1850's must be: simple, limited in their geography, pious. His seven daughters constantly refer to him deferentially as "Father," and are often present in scenes as unspeaking props. One wants to refer Lunde to Alice Munro's *A Wilderness Station*, for example, to see how a modern writer can wonderfully animate realistic voices from the past. George is a caricature of a midwestern farmer, caring for his bees, occasionally ungrammatical, with few ambitions beyond passing the farm to his only son. Tao is the only character with hints of subtlety – she deserved more education than she got, has complicated feelings towards her husband and her duties as a pollinator.

I was also hoping for more fully imagined worlds. In Tao's China of 2098, while the environment and working conditions are radically different, the post-apocalyptic Beijing still has subways, restaurants and hospitals which, other than being largely abandoned, seem to be as they are today. Tao even calls her husband on an implausibly semi-functioning landline she comes across in an abandoned building.

Descriptions of non-bee-aspects are often clunky or redundant. George observes:

**"We were like Martians in white suits with hats and veils, in and out of the beams of light from the vehicles, as if we had come from a foreign planet..."**

Dialogue is also often shaky, and overly reliant on clichés - whether this is the fault of Lunde's original manuscript, or the English translation by Diane Oakley, I am not sure. Tao wandering Beijing:

**"Every station I caught sight of awakened hope. But every attempt to open a door, to come out onto the platform was the same slap in the face. Because they weren't in operation. I was still in no-man's land."**

Reading fiction should be challenging, pleasurable, immersive; the value of literature cannot simply be measured by its adherence to the correct side of important causes. Speculative fiction in particular is a powerful experience to induce readers to imagine futures as they might be, and to reflect upon the possibilities of change. Speculative fiction on the topic of environmental destruction is a powerful corollary to the dry language often used in science and policy; a good piece of fiction can access a broader range of ideas than a position paper. The *History of Bees*, though ambitious in its subject matter, sometimes fails to achieve this.



PHOTO Simon Ryder-Burbidge

COMING THIS JUNE

## Ecology Action Centre's first annual Hike-A-Thon!

Our first annual **Hike-A-Thon fundraiser** is happening this June, and we want **YOU** to be a part of it! Explore Mi'kma'ki/Nova Scotia while supporting the Ecology Action Centre.

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Visit [ecologyaction.ca/hike-a-thon](https://ecologyaction.ca/hike-a-thon) to sign up or for more information.

Questions? Contact [brandy.rivers@ecologyaction.ca](mailto:brandy.rivers@ecologyaction.ca).

Ian (he/him) is a chemist and writer originally from Truro, now living in Halifax.

# Public Sculpture Drives Climate Change Adaption

by **LISA COCHRANE** /// EAC Volunteer

Imagine yourself at the foot of a massive work of public art installed in north end Halifax, marveling at its scale and futuristic design. Now imagine this extraordinary landmark has the engineering capacity to generate clean energy. What use do you envision for this renewable power? Coastal erosion or sea level rise mitigation? Servicing dwelling solutions for our unhoused neighbours? This reality may be closer than you think.

Enter the newly formed Society for Art, Land and Tide, or SALT. The local SALT organization is developing an exciting collaboration with the Land Art Generator Initiative (LAGi), a global brand that promotes sustainable energy solutions through design competitions, resulting in concepts for public monuments to the abundant possibilities of a future beyond fossil fuel extraction.

LAGi's American co-founders, Robert Ferry and Elizabeth Monoian, have hosted open-call design competitions for innovative works that marry public art and energy-producing infrastructure at sites around the world since 2009: United Arab Emirates, New York City, Copenhagen, Melbourne, Abu Dhabi, Manheim and Fly Ranch at the Burning Man site in Nevada. LAGi's exceptional work has resulted in over 1,500 designs from teams in 80 countries. Several winning designs have been constructed on site; other project concepts have been widely exhibited virtually.

The Arch of Time, the Berlin-based architect Riccardo Mariano's LAGi prize-winning concept, is a permanent solar photovoltaic sculpture and time-measuring device that will offer public park-goers in Houston, Texas a magical light display running each hour within a shaded outdoor space. Additionally, this artwork aims to generate 400,000 kWh of solar energy each year, which is earmarked to power an entire underserved neighbourhood. Construction is currently underway.

**Lisa** (she/her) is a co-founder and director of SALT, the Society for Art, Land and Tide.

Arch of Time, Land Art Generator artwork by Riccardo Mariano. COURTESY Land Art Generator Initiative (LAGi)

## TAKE ACTION

To learn more about the Society for Art, Land and Tide (SALT) and the Land Art Generator Initiative (LAGi), visit their websites at [artlandtide.com](http://artlandtide.com) and [landartgenerator.org](http://landartgenerator.org).

SALT is proposing the *LAGi Halifax (Kjipuktuk) 2026* project, an international design competition for public art and sustainable engineering infrastructure concepts designed for a specific site in the north end of Halifax. A first for Canada, this ambitious project's goal is to engage the site partner in a meaningful consultation process towards the creation of a design brief, then open the competition up to the world's best designers. Each design team will be asked to bring together the disciplines of public art, urban planning, creative placemaking, renewable energy and environmental justice.

SALT will actively encourage the engagement of local design teams; local and international judges will choose the final prize winner from a small group of semi-finalists. Any team can win, but the chosen LAGi design must directly benefit the Halifax site and wider community according to the design brief.

SALT's goal in hosting a LAGi project in Halifax is to galvanize the local public to consider placemaking, art and creative design practice as key factors in renewable energy infrastructure. Another priority of the project is to facilitate pathways to address the historical lack of diversity in local environmental and design sectors.

Ultimately, through *LAGi Halifax (Kjipuktuk) 2026*, SALT aims to forge an indelible connection between public art and the sustainable energy infrastructure that our city - and our world - need now.

# The Story of Green



Before chemical pigments, artists used natural green pigments in their work.

PHOTO: Paul Blenkhorn/Unsplash

by **GABRIELLE LAFRANCE** /// EAC Volunteer

I love staring at a forest from afar, allowing my eyes to sink into the lush tapestry of greens that never fail to pull me in. Plein air paintings created by artists have a way of reminding me of that feeling, but nothing is quite the same.

If an artist hopes to capture any scene of nature, they probably need a good few shades of green in their arsenal.

Before chemical pigments, this was quite an endeavor. To the right is a brief overview of the history of natural green pigments.

Throughout the centuries humans have spent trying to recreate green, photosynthetic organisms produce it as simply as breathing. So next time you go outside, let yourself get pulled into nature and appreciate the effortless artwork. These ecosystems, much like paintings, are a testament to the delicate balance of nature. In appreciating their beauty, pledge to protect and preserve it.

**Gabrielle** (she/her) is a recent psychology graduate who is beginning to harbour some regrets for not having studied environmental science. Lately, she's been trying to improve her sourdough bread, oil painting and knitting.

1300s  
1400s  
1500s  
1600s  
1700s  
1800s  
1900s  
2000s

**1300-1600:** Ground into powder, the mineral malachite may be the oldest known green pigment. It was found in Egyptian tombs and was common in European paintings mainly throughout the 15th and 16th centuries. The brilliant shade known as "malachite green" is used today as the marking ink for plastic surgeons, though it no longer contains the mineral itself.

**1300-1900:** Green earth is a common mineral pigment usually made from celadonite or glauconite. In Canada, it was used by Northwest Coast First Nations. Tlingit, Haida, Kwakwaka'wakw and Tsimshian artists used the green pigment on items like wolf masks, headdresses and rattles. In Europe, green earth was used by medieval Italian painters for underpainting flesh tones.

**1400-1800:** Verdigris and copper resinate were pigments used by Italian masters, often laid over each other to produce a more intense hue than green earth. These pigments were famously used in Herman van der Mijl's Garden Flowers (1715).

**1750-1850:** Wabanaki encompasses five principal nations: the Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqiyik, Passamaquoddy, Penobscot and Abenaki. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, their basket makers used natural dyes made from tree bark and roots to produce shades of green in their basket weaving. Basket makers later combined Prussian blue and chromium yellow to make green.

**1775-1960:** Bolstered by some new colors, the French Impressionists vividly depicted lush green landscapes. These new bright green hues came at a price: Scheele's Green and Paris Green were derived from arsenic and were as toxic as they were popular.

**1817:** Chlorophyll, the pigment which lends plants its green, was first classified in 1817. Chlorophyll plays a major role in photosynthesis, the biological mechanism that transforms light from the sun and converts it into energy.

**1838-Today:** Viridian emerged from hydrated chromium oxide in the first half of the 19th century, along with many other synthetic pigments. It became a popular choice for the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists. The examination of viridian now serves to authenticate artwork, even some of Van Gogh's!

# Action is Our Middle Name

## WILDERNESS

It's time for a new Protected Areas Strategy for Nova Scotia, and the provincial government did deliver one just before Christmas. The Wilderness Team had advocated for a strategy that included a new slate of proposed sites for protection but the new strategy did not do that. The province really needs to get moving on identifying new sites to reach its 20 per cent land and water protection commitment by 2030. Instead, the high-level strategy released in December 2023 contains a vision and guiding but falls short of starting to get the job done. The EAC will be here every year until 2030 (and beyond) to push for actual site-specific protection, and we'll keep advocating for sites not yet legally protected from the 2013 protected areas plan.

Gold mining continues to rear its ugly head in Nova Scotia. For now, the pressure seems to be off for two places proposed for massive, open pit gold mines. The company advancing those plans, called St. Barbara, withdrew from the environmental assessment process for the Beaver Dam (East River, Sheet Harbour) and Cochrane Hill (St. Mary's River) locations. But they are doubling down at the Fifteen Mile Stream site (inland on the Eastern Shore along the East River, Sheet Harbour), where they want to mine four gigantic pits, after they relocate Seloam Brook! The Wilderness Team staff hosted two workshops for community members to demonstrate how to engage with the environmental assessment for this site and for other industrial projects.



PHOTO Sara Farias

## TRANSPORTATION

Our team collaborated with local NGOs on Let's Walk, Roll, and Ride, Spryfield! The goal was to promote and celebrate active and multimodal mobility in the Spryfield community. This two-week-long event series offered opportunities for engagement via events and programming, such as our Pop-up Bike Hub and Walking and Cycling audits, and culminated with the annual Bike Summit. The initiative also collected public feedback and concerns regarding active transportation to be collated in a report that will direct future collaborations in Spryfield.

In February, we collaborated with Mulgrave Park Caring & Learning Centre to host bike repair workshops for African Nova Scotian Youth. Over four sessions, participants gained hands-on experience in basic bike repair and maintenance. Dedicated bike stands and tools were also purchased for the Caring & Learning Centre so that youth would have access to the tools and supplies to apply their repair skills independently. We also led the 'Shifting Gears' workshop for Bike Again. This workshop series aimed to build capacity for our Sunday open hours catering specifically to femmes, trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming folks.

Winter Walk Day occurred this February, with over 80 schools and youth groups participating by going outside for a winter walk! We also completed two Youth Mobility Audits and provided reports to the groups and community decision makers. These reports can be used for municipal or community planning and can connect youth with organizations to build on their recommendations.



COURTESY Halifax Food Policy Alliance



## FOOD

In December, we completed Part B of the *JustFOOD Action Plan for the Halifax Region* with our co-collaborators at the Halifax Food Policy Alliance. Part B includes implementation strategies and budget proposals for 2024 priority recommendations. Many implementation strategies were developed in partnership with community, including the Indigenous Working Group, the African Nova Scotian and Black Working Group and No One Is Illegal – Nova Scotia. Part B is the culmination of our ongoing work with community partners and regional food actors, aimed at envisioning a more robust and equitable food system. In February, Halifax Regional Council endorsed Part B of the *JustFOOD Action Plan*, and we mobilized community to demand that council approve the full budget for the plan. We are now beginning to implement our priority recommendations, with the first step being to form the Halifax Food Council, and are eager to continue working with our community partners.

Collaborative partnerships continue to inform and drive our work in 2024. We are collaborating with Feed NS to design and implement two pilots; one targeting rural food access and the other working on launching Halifax's first social supermarket. We continue to advocate for a national healthy school food program with the Nova Scotia Coalition for Healthy School Food that will benefit youth and families. We also continue to collaborate with Halifax Regional Municipality and community partners to support food distribution and reduce food loss in times of emergency.



PHOTO Kelsey Lane

## MARINE

We played a critical role in the successful negotiations at the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) to adopt limits on fishing for blue sharks in the Atlantic Ocean. We released an in-depth analysis of the 53 Atlantic fishing countries' (including Canada's) adherence to their obligations regarding shark conservation measures, which led to new compliance and enforcement rules being agreed to.

Our Kelp Kurious project continues to help folks learn about the growing opportunities in the kelp farming sector. We spoke at the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat Fisheries Conference as well as the Nova Scotia Aquaculture Association Sea Farmers Conference. We also led a "How to Create a Kelp Seedling Nursery" workshop and hosted a workshop with the provincial Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture on how to navigate the paperwork for licenses for small kelp farmers. Our baby kelp seedlings, grown in our demonstration nursery, were transferred to the ocean sea farm of Peter Darnell (Indian Point Marine Farms) to grow over the winter. The team expects another plentiful harvest just ahead of our second annual Kelp Fest coming up this May – join us in celebrating and supporting this growing sustainable sector!

## ENERGY & CLIMATE

In December, we concluded our Energy Transition Deep Canvassing Pilot and have since published our findings in a project report and built internal support and recommendations for future deep canvassing projects at the EAC.

Our ongoing work with low carbon communities ramped up this year as we organized training for 12 home energy auditors to conduct observational energy audits on faith buildings. In March we launched our free energy audits for faith buildings in Nova Scotia program alongside our partners at Efficiency NS, Clean Foundation and Faith & the Common Good.

We have worked to engage, mobilize and participate in several coalitions and working groups both at home, and across Turtle Island. Alongside 13 other organizations, we have worked on the Energy Poverty Task Force to submit a series of joint recommendations to the provincial government for more comprehensive programming in support of low- and modest-income households.

We collaborated with the Marine Team to provide meaningful and holistic comments on federal Bill C-49 and participated in the provincial Regional Assessment of Offshore Wind Development. With the Wilderness Team, we engaged in ongoing, community-led discussions around onshore wind development for green hydrogen production and published our own stance in a comprehensive press release.

We continued to lobby, campaign and strengthen community ties through participating in several consultations, advisory groups and legislative sittings for a more accessible and affordable energy landscape for all.



## COASTAL & WATER

Since last year's announcement by the province about the indefinite delay in the Coastal Protection Act (CPA) regulations, our work demanding their immediate release and implementation has not stopped. Throughout the last few months, the EAC mobilized over 1,100 Nova Scotians to send letters to the provincial government, all calling for immediate action. We held a press conference on the steps of the Halifax waterfront, calling on the Nova Scotia government to fully implement the CPA regulations and, in doing so, take the very first and most basic step in coastal climate adaptation: stop building in known risk areas. Because the continued delay unfairly offloads costs onto municipalities, 13 Nova Scotian municipalities joined the call for the implementation of the regulations. Five municipalities – Town of Bridgewater, Town of Clark's Harbour, Town of Digby, Town of Kentville and Town of Lunenburg – signed on to a joint statement organized by the EAC. Another six municipalities – the District of Chester, Kings County, Town of New Glasgow, Town of Trenton, West Hants Regional Municipality, Region of Queens Municipality, and Pictou County – sent their own letters.

We also continued to advocate for stronger protection of wetlands and to spread awareness of the importance of wetlands in climate change mitigation and adaptation. In collaboration with Ducks Unlimited Canada, the EAC created a wetlands toolkit which launched on February 2, World Wetlands Day! This toolkit, which can be found on EAC's website, includes many resources about wetlands, wetlands conservation and policy and educational materials.



PHOTO Peijing Pu



## BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Municipal budget, plan reviews and an upcoming election have been the focus for the Built Environment Team. In light of provincial delays on coastal protection and updated building codes, we focused our energy on pushing the municipality to build sustainable complete communities. Following our summer research project, we created a new public resource titled "The Case for Building Complete Communities in Halifax Regional Municipality," which covers the history of urban sprawl, questions to ask yourself and the opportunities and barriers of building complete communities.

The Built Environment Team is developing new partnerships and strengthening old ones. We are exploring a new opportunity to collaborate with national not-for-profit Park People to advance our work on Halifax's green network and to promote urban parks and connected green spaces in Atlantic Canada. Lastly, we hosted another successful annual meeting of Our HRM Alliance coalition and welcomed nominations for a new coalition chair.

# The Seasonal Gourmet

by **GABRIELLE LAFRANCE** /// EAC Volunteer

## Hearty Seafood Chowder

Just like spring emerging from a cold Nova Scotian winter, coming home to my father's seafood chowder always warmed me up to my bones. The simmering pot filled with the catch of the day and vegetables, all melting together in a creamy broth, is a taste of home. I hope you'll enjoy this seafood chowder and that it will warm up your kitchen during those early spring days that might still be holding on to the last remnants of winter's chill.



### INGREDIENTS

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>10 large</b> scallops, fresh or thawed frozen            | <b>1 cup</b> lobster, cooked, chopped                                |
| <b>3 cups</b> water   | <b>18</b> shrimp, fresh or thawed frozen, tails removed and deveined |
| <b>2 large</b> potatoes, washed, chopped into ½-inch pieces | <b>2 Tbsp</b> chives, fresh, chopped                                 |
| <b>2 large</b> carrots, washed, sliced into ¼-inch pieces   | <b>2 Tbsp</b> dill, fresh, finely chopped                            |
| <b>1 tsp</b> salt   | <b>¼ tsp</b> ground black pepper                                     |
| <b>1¼ cups</b> 35 per cent whipping cream                   | <b>3</b> bay leaves  |
| <b>1 cup</b> haddock, fresh or thawed frozen, chopped       | <b>1 tsp</b> fresh lemon zest  |

### DIRECTIONS

- 1 Dry the scallops** and set aside. The drier the surface of the scallops, the better they will sear.
- 2 Heat some oil** in a pot over medium-high heat. Once hot, gently sear the scallops. Cook until golden, about 2–3 minutes per side. Remove the scallops from the pot and set aside.
- 3 Add water, potatoes, carrots and half of the salt** to the pot. Use a wooden spoon to scrape the bottom of the pot. Bring the water to a boil, then reduce the heat and simmer for 12–15 minutes, until the vegetables are tender.
- 4 Pour the cream** into the pot. Bring the chowder back to a simmer and continue to cook for 10 minutes.
- 5 Add the haddock, lobster and shrimp** to the pot. Simmer for 5 minutes.
- 6 Add chives, dill, pepper and remaining salt.** Stir well and adjust the seasoning to suit your taste.
- 7 Ladle the chowder into bowls**, making sure each serving gets a fair share of seafood! Top each serving with pan-seared scallops and a sprinkle of fresh dill.
- 8 Serve hot** with fresh garlic rolls. **Enjoy!**

**Gabrielle** (she/her) is a recent psychology graduate who is beginning to harbour some regrets for not having studied environmental science. Lately, she's been trying to improve her bouldering, kombucha making and crochet.

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# Save the Date for Kelp Fest 2024!

**MAY 8 – 11, Nova Scotia**

**Product Showcase | Industry Networking  
Farmer Resources | Research | Food & Beverages**

**May 8** Atlantic Canadian Kelp Business Development Showcase at St. Mary's Boat Club, Halifax

Join us in supporting cultivated kelp entrepreneurs from across the region. Listen to entrepreneur pitches for new business ideas and try sample products. Network with the new cohort of Atlantic Canadian kelp-based businesses. Cash prizes and business development packages will be awarded by industry experts.



**May 9** Atlantic Canadian Kelp Fest Conference at St. Mary's Boat Club, Halifax

Interested in pursuing opportunities in the cultivated kelp sector? Already involved with the cultivated kelp sector? Join us for a day of collaboration, scientific and market research, and sharing farmer and entrepreneur resources. Registration will be available on our website.



**May 11** Open House at Indian Point Marine Farms Ltd., Mahone Bay

Join us on site at the Kelp Kurious Education Centre & Indian Point Marine Farms Ltd. to check out our kelp seedling nursery, explore the touch tank and learn about how kelp is farmed. Head to restaurants in the area to eat and drink kelp.



Visit [ecologyaction.ca](http://ecologyaction.ca) for more details, additional events and to register!



Ecology Action Centre