Bringing Research to LIFE

Conference takes a close look at climate change

The University of Manitoba participated in a two-day conference on the subject of climate change.

Designed for educators who wish to embed the principles and practices of sustainable development in their teaching and program planning, Climate Change: The Future is Now was presented at the Winnipeg Convention Centre on Nov 27 and 28, and was geared towards educators, leaders of business, NGO’s and government who wish to engage their employees and stakeholders in sustainable practices and operations.

David Barber, Clayton H. Riddell Faculty of Environment, Earth and Resources associate dean of research and project leader of the IPY-Circumpolar Flaw Lead system study, was an active participant in the conference.

Also involved with the conference from the U of M were professor and project lead of STAR, John Hanesiak; program coordinator of Schools on Board Lucette Barber; associate professor Tim coordinator of Schools on Board and geography Ronald Stewart; program project lead of STAR, John Hanesiak; from the U of M were professor and participant in the conference.

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Meet the other Afghanistan
MacDonald proves that one person can make a difference

BY DALE BARBOUR
The Bulletin

As a country we’ve done a good job of putting our troops on the frontline in Afghanistan in an effort to contain the Taliban insurgency. But while we know how to fight an enemy on the field of battle, understanding how to rebuild a country from within represents a different challenge.

A former Canadian politician and founder of Future Generations Canada, Flora MacDonald delivered the sixth annual Sol Kanes Lecture on Peace and Justice entitled “Peacebuilding, Development, Hope … The Other Afghanistan” at the University of Manitoba on Nov. 19. Her message? We need to take a broader approach if we really want to help Afghanistan.

“I support our troops,” MacDonald said. “And we need the military presence to contain the Taliban insurgents in their heartland. But we’ve concluded that the situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated this year as the Taliban have been slowly breaking free of Pakistan border region and moving towards Kabul.

But MacDonald said what the troops can’t do is long-term development for Afghanistan.

“They can help build a school, but they can’t ensure that it’s staffed on an ongoing basis,” MacDonald said. If Canada wants to help Afghanistan on a long-term basis, MacDonald says we need to work with the Afghani people to discover what their needs are and how best to fulfill them.

Future Generations Canada focuses its work in Bamyan province, in Central Afghanistan. It’s not a big operation. In fact it has exactly one staff member in Afghanistan: Abdullah Barat, an Afghani-Canadian, recruited by MacDonald to run operations in his home country. He looks after logistics in Bamyan while MacDonald attempts to raise funds and attention for the operation in Canada.

The projects are modest, but the impact can be spectacular. In areas where there is no electricity, MacDonald said they have focused on setting up wind powered pumps to get fresh water and solar-powered lights to light up houses. The solar cells charge up during the day providing power for the lights in the evening.

“Artificial light transforms the lives of villagers,” MacDonald said. “Suddenly children can study in the evening and women can weave.” In other words, light equals time.

Other projects are on an as-needed basis. MacDonald said when a group of teens approached her and said they wanted the opportunity to go to school, MacDonald guaranteed them that if they could supply a building, she would link them to a teacher. They upheld their end of the bargain, building the school themselves, and she upheld her end. A form of government is emerging in Afghanistan but not necessarily one dictated by Western thinking,” MacDonald added. In Bamyan province village councils have been formed and in some areas have grown into regional councils. The councils meet weekly to develop a work plan for their village or region and then go and make it happen. Significantly, 40 per cent of the council members are female.

MacDonald said the military’s job isn’t done in Afghanistan. If anything, she says the war in Iraq has distracted the United States from what is happening in Afghanistan.

“They need to be here where they started after 9-11. They’ve been ignoring it ever since,” MacDonald said. “They need to get back to where it all began.”

MacDonald said the West also has to recognize that not all Taliban supporters are insurgents bent on winning their battle through military means. Some of them desire peace. During her first trips to Afghanistan in 2001 prior to the NATO invasion, MacDonald was helping establish secret schools for females in private homes. During this period, females were not allowed to attend schools in Afghanistan. Her efforts did not go unnoticed and a couple of Taliban supporters approached her.

“They said, ‘We know what you’re doing. But we won’t say anything about it if you allow our daughters to go to,’” MacDonald said. “And by helping developing other areas of Afghanistan such as the Bamyan province, MacDonald said the Western powers would be helping solidify support in the rest of the country.

“We have to realize that people in Afghanistan could do so much more,” MacDonald said.

New restaurant opens in Smartpark

Smartpark is a community of innovators, a place where private sector know-how walks hand in hand with university research. And every community needs a cafe.

edna fedya opened its doors on Dec. 1 in One Research Road, joining DMT, BASF, Wolf Trax, MRAC and Monsanto.

The new restaurant is expected to be open from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., seven days a week. While the name might not be familiar, the menu, service and character of the new restaurant should be because edna fedya is a subsidiary of Stella’s Cafe and Bakery.

“We’ve always wanted to have a Stella in our area,” explains Larry Paskaruk, Smartpark’s director, property development and management.

“When we were the one, 1,600 people working on One Research Road 3½ years ago we set aside 1,100 square feet for a food service provider but we couldn’t find one that fit the right attributes until we talked to Stella’s.

Gary Brownstone, director, the eureka project: Smartpark’s Incubator, said the new restaurant will fill a definite need in the community.

“There’s a 1,600 people working in Smartpark and up until now we’ve had no food service,” Brownstone said. Sure, there are plenty of food options on the Fort Garry campus, and Pembina Highway is just a short drive away, but the park needed somewhere that people could walk to on their own – a sort of town centre. Now people will have the option of grabbing a lunch or breakfast and, perhaps even more importantly, they can head over to edna fedya’s during the day to talk business over some coffee and food.

“Everyone is welcome,” Paskaruk added. “We’re hoping people from the rest of the campus will join us and we’ve got the new indoor soccer stadium right next door.”

Stella’s co-general manager Brad Burrows says Smartpark was keen to have them join the community. While the edna fedya brand is new, the experience will be what regular Stella’s customers have come to expect.

“We think it’s going to turn out great,” Burrows said. “It’s a little bit of a different floor model from our usual style, but it will have the same hustle and bustle that people like and the menu will be almost exactly the same.”

The restaurant’s location fronts onto a patio – a neat little town square for the businesses at One Research Road – which means people will have the option of eating indoors and out during the summer months.

Flora MacDonald

The University of Manitoba is providing research support to Pimachiowin Aki Corporation in its efforts to have part of the Canadian boreal forest designated a World Heritage Site. Researchers Iain Davidson-Hunt and Virginia Petch will lead the re- search with graduate students Catie Burlando, Carlos Idrobo and Christin Didora) at the Natural Resources Insti- tute. The results of this work make an important contribution to the nomina- tion document which will be submit- ted to Canada and ultimately the World Heritage Committee.

When completed in about a year, this research should help show that the boreal forest is outstanding not only for its natural assets, but also for its cultural importance to the world, said Pimachiowin Aki spokesperson Sophia Rabiauskas.

“Most people know that the trees and animals in the forest are important to protect, but not everyone realizes that Anishinaabe people have been living on this land for 5,000 years. This study will record that history and show why the area is valuable culturally and spiritual- ly,” says Rabiauskas, a member of the Poppal River First Nation located in the proposed World Heritage Site area.

The university’s research will be- gin with an overview of other current World Heritage Sites designated as cul- tural landscapes.