

Meg Hobson

Different yet connected

In gathering the latest contributions for the One Sky's Spring newsletter 2009 it struck me how different and yet connected we all are, it just depends on which hemisphere you are in and where you originally come from. We are all under the same big blue sky, connected by the same water flowing from coastlines far and wideAs I read about the heat, sweat, dust, rain, vivid colour and grime I look out on white fields of apparent stillness and calm in Smithers . Apparent, I say because spring is coming ever so slowly but

it is tangible. Different relativities I guess, reading about the southern lands, pulls on one's heart strings of origin, and yet where one is right now is really what matters. So as these wonderful contributions spread across the pages I hope you are as amazed as I am of the incredible efforts and intent of all One Sky's people to create hope for a more sustainable and compassionate world. Thanks to all it has been such a pleasure to read and create.



Craig Paulson

Sowing Seeds 2009 Update

For the third consecutive year, Sowing Seeds in Sierra Leone, has partnered with One Sky, to support children in their pursuit of education.

Volunteers in Canada partnered with Common Ground in Freetown, Sierra Leone to pay for school fees, uniforms, school supplies, and exam fees. The 2008/2009 academic year saw 888 beneficiaries in primary and secondary school, and 7 new technical-vocational students supported in nursing, electrical installation, carpentry, and computer science. The momentum from the project is building, as the demand for adult education is increasing. Look for the 2009 campaign this fall.

Adaptation all around

More and more, climate change discourse is focused on the topic of adaptation to climate change. Even with the most ambitious mitigation efforts, warming is unavoidable, making adaptation essential. The pressure to develop responses is increasing, as it becomes clear that global emissions are now higher than the concentrations on which the IPCC's (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) worst-case calculations are based, and climate impacts may occur faster and be more severe than predicted.

At Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, I studied the theories of adaption and worked as a research assistant at an adaptation think-tank. Through a "volunteership" with One Sky and Asociación para la Conservación de la Cuenca Amazónica (ACCA), I now find myself



in Cusco, Peru, working with local people who are putting adaptation concepts into practice. Peru is considered one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change in the world. Think melting glaciers, drying and warming trends in the eastern Andes - the single most biologically diverse area in the world, and a large portion of the population living in poverty.

I am collaborating with ACCA scientists and community leaders from the Queros indigenous community (La Comunidad Nativa de Queros) to lay the groundwork for adaptation activities. The Queros indigenous community is situated on

...any loss of these ecosystem goods and services is a threat...



the Andean flank of the Amazon. With a newly created conservation concession and a unique institutional partnership with ACCA and the Peruvian government, it is well-positioned to enter into the emerging ecosystem goods and services market. Examples of ecosystem goods and services are regulation of water quantity and quality, species & habitat protection, carbon sequestration and storage, and soil formation and fertility. At a community level, any loss of these ecosystem goods and services is a threat to livelihoods dependant on natural resources and undermines the resilience of the community to adapt to climate change. At a global level, entering into the ecosystems goods and services market (i.e. voluntary avoided deforestation schemes) would simultaneously preserve a critical carbon sink and the forest's exceptional biodiversity, contributing both toward mitigating global warming and assisting the region to adapt to climate change. In the coming weeks I will be helping present these ideas to both communities in the Cusco region and the Cusco regional government through workshops, conferences and proposal writing.

Last week we visited the Queros community and I was immersed into the ACCA relationship building process. Much of the theory on adaptation emphasizes the role of social networks and relationships in building community resilience to climate impacts. Yet all the reading in the world did little to prepare me for the actual process of relationship building - eating beetle larvae, listening to the community leaders until the wee hours of the morning while being eaten alive by chiggers, and trying to gain the trust of women who can't fathom why I would travel miles away from home without my husband. Thus begins my own internal adaptation process as I learn the challenges of putting theory into practice.



John Kelson

Building Sustainability

Canopy Walkway being built near Cusco, Peru

As Lady Di said. "It's daunting. Simply daunting." This is a million dollar pre-fabricated canopy walkway project designed to fit the site with limited flexibility for error.

What is a canopy walkway? It is a series of bridges, either sitting on towers or hanging in trees, that allow people to walk in the various levels of the forest so they can see what is there. My approach is to design a facility that will attract visitors that will generate revenue to support conservation. These visitors will be there for; education, basically students, regular tourists will contribute the majority of revenue, and researchers who can take advantage of the access to study the canopy where a lot of research potential lies. People like to travel and do things. So many people go to Niagara Falls or Butchart Gardens because it is something to do. Tourists will go to this canopy walkway near Cusco because it will catch their attention and there are few other forest-based things to do here, or anywhere. Cusco is one of the bigger tourism destinations in the world because of Machu Picchu. Hopefully the walkway will attract enough visitors to generate revenue for Amazon Conservation Association and allow it to continue to support conservation projects in the Peruvian cloud forest and Amazon.

The conservation rationale for protecting cloud forest is fairly complex, but in a nutshell, the eastern slope of the Andes is covered with cloud forest where the warm moist air of the Amazon rises up, cools, forms clouds and rains. Between the high mountains of the Andes and the flat Amazon there are forests with alder, salal, cougars, and a climate like Kitimat in April. But instead of Devil's club most of the under story is exotic and spectacular, such as orchids and

fern trees. In a warming climate, places where species will persist must have somewhere to migrate to, somewhere with a temperature gradient. The highest priority areas to protect have high biodiversity and a slope above them. Manu National Park is right below the walkway and has the highest biodiversity in the world.

At the moment there are 15 people from very rural and poor communities near the walkway working with us. These men and women will eventually be the guides but first they are helping to build the walkway. The guides are awesome, all of them.

The women work hard, not as strong as the men, but they work all day long. The gender-sensitive concept is a good one and now, after multiple design revisions, we have almost everything in place. This walkway will be awesome. Literally.



Editors note: This project has been long and the end is in sight but currently John is waiting for his tools to be released from Peruvian customs, no one knows how long that will take!!!!

Nigeria, leading from within

It is hot, sticky and really sweaty. It is vibrant, full of passion, full of life, welcoming and warm. These have been my initial impressions of my first visit to Nigeria. As many of you know – and many of you do not – I am here in Calabar, in southeast Nigeria near the Cameroon border working on a leadership project with a Canadian NGO called One Sky, working with my colleagues and friends Gail and Mike who runs One Sky. The purpose of One Sky's work here is to work with 30 emerging leaders in the NGO field for the next three years to develop their capacity to be leaders in the areas of social change and sustainable development. Based on an integral framework, the program encourages participants to look within and to develop their interior capacities for self-reflection, perspective-taking and interpersonal communication, as well as the exterior capacities, including, stronger negotiation skills, more effective project management, and more efficient and ethical financial management. Developing the self along the way to working towards sustainability, participants, will be asked to tangibly apply their learning to new initiatives with their organization that achieve real and lasting change in an area that they previously thought could not be done.

Over sixty people applied to participate in the leadership project and we spent the first few days interviewing forty of those candidates in order to narrow it down to the final group. As people came in one after the next, I was continuously inspired and moved by the passion and dedication that is so evident in their work and in their hopes for change, what was the most amazing was the energy and passion of the people, and the individual stories. There is Robert, a twenty three year old who wrote a book called Youth Know Thyself during his undergraduate degree and has since started an NGO of the same name that aims to empower the youth of Nigeria to more deeply know themselves so that they can more effectively serve the country. There is Nneoyi, a man who formerly was involved in political thuggery, paid by different politicians to engage in acts of violence, stealing of ballot boxes, and various other threatening methods to overcome opponents. While leaving such a lifestyle is almost unheard of, Nneoyi was inspired to leave his life behind a few years ago and is now committed to working towards good governance and ending corruption. And there is Maria, a lawyer who in addition to running her own NGO that supports sustainable livelihoods works tirelessly to bring





gender awareness to Nigeria, including being involved in changing the property laws so that women can now inherit property.

Nigerians are not shy. They are not reserved. They are direct, animated, powerful and warm. They engage fully with life, and engaged fully with our workshop. There was intense laughter, there was the heated discussions and impassioned speeches that are all part of regular communication. Patricia, the Nigerian One Sky staff member, laughs at how 'diplomatic' Canadians are. So polite, so reserved, and never actually speaking what they are thinking. Here, you simply state it as it is. If I am angry, then I tell you I'm angry. If I'm sad, then I tell you I'm sad. I will tell you what I think directly. There were times when the energy felt as if it were going to burst out through the concrete walls of the small air-conditioned room, as people excitedly exchanged exclamations of approval, disapproval, disagreement and voracious agreement. People participate with such openness, and a kind of vulnerability that is expressed even within the power of their words and statements. Quickly, the energy of the group felt connected as people opened and shared the foundation of their spirituality which is so much a part of their work.

As is the custom here, we opened and closed each day with a prayer led by one of the participants. While this would seem strange somehow in a Canadian or Western context, it felt so natural and flowing at this workshop, and seemed to open everyone there to a larger purpose of why they were there and where the inspiration of their work flowed from. It somehow seems easier to not need spirit in a context where suffering and death are much further removed. In a place where life is so much more uncertain, it seems that there is a more natural attunement to the vibrations of the universe which reveals something deeper. It was amazing to see how naturally spirit could be woven into the experience of a leadership workshop. In this way, the simultaneous turn inward towards self and outwards to an ever-expanding sense of care seemed to be naturally co-created in this learning space. It has been a powerful three weeks.

There are so many stories to share but I will leave my stories there for now and look forward to sharing more as this project and this adventure in Nigeria continues to unfold over the next three years.

Mining reclamation underway

Well, the reclamations are both underway, despite the inherent difficulties of negotiating with three levels of chiefs in three chiefdoms, a mining company who is having legal and solvency troubles (haven't paid their site security staff for four months who weren't going to let us use the bulldozer), and on-going unrealistic demands for things like rototillers from some cooperative members. While the process has not been entirely smooth, it is beyond gratifying to see the remarkable changes in the land; from being completely unusable covered with hills of formerly mined-out land disguised in twelve feet of dry elephant grass and pitted with smelling stagnant pools, to rich, flat, arable land teeming with excited farmers from our cooperatives and diamond diggers seeking a different future.

Both Kainey and Bandefayie are dramatic sites, as on every side there are artisanal diamond diggers of all ages turning the topsoil to reach the gravel-layer where diamonds hide, again further destroying land which has been mined repeatedly for the last forty years. The reclamations themselves were funded jointly through One Sky and a grant from Diamond Development Initiative. www.ddiglobal.org

Kainsey-Kapeteh has leveled by-hand approximately six acres with forty-one people in two weeks. On the inaugural day we had over one hundred and ten people arrive looking for work, we had only wanted to hire forty. On the first day we hired anyone who had brought their own tools and cooperative members for a total of seventy men and eight women for a decent daily wage and lunch. It was inspiring to watch giant hills of 'over bar' (mining tailings) slowly come down to fill deep water-filled pits. Sadly, the day before work began at Kainsey yet another child drowned in one such pond adjacent to the site.

Bandefayie had the good fortune during last year's pilot to have approximately six acres leveled over four days by a mining company bulldozer that was idle in the area, and then working the area by hand



for almost two weeks. This year the bulldozer came at the request of the Paramount Chief and was available for only two days but managed to level the remaining area beside the river. Currently forty-one people are hard at work creating irrigation ditches and berms for the upcoming rice planting season.

Membership in both cooperatives has expanded considerably, but will take a month or so to see who is actually committed to the idea once the wave of excitement has worn off and it's sunk-in that the wages have stopped. It is a major shift in thinking to work collectively, for though there is a strong tradition of food-for-work among a small group who are fed to work each others plots in rotation, the democratic decision-making structure, low individual risk but serious personal commitment, and lack of daily incentive make universal buy-in for cooperatives a difficult thing in Sierra Leone.

Both film-maker Sheryle Carlson and ecologist Michelle Villeneuve have arrived and it is so exciting

**...its a major shift in thinking to
work collectively...**

for me to see the deliverables from the IUCN “Life After Diamonds” project slowly being checked-off! We are hard at work with video techs from Environmental Foundation for Africa(EFA) and Green Actors of West Africa (GAWA) on a film following these reclamations and the on-going issues surrounding the diamond and gold mining sector in Sierra Leone. The short film will be used as a tool to build international awareness and push the lobby effort, as well as being ours and CSSL’s contribution to the State of the Environment (SOTE) film series(watch for it later this year at environmental film festivals near you!).

I am in negotiations on a partnership with the World Bank’s “Justice for the Poor” Program for our “Mining Rights and Rules” grassroots-level handbook and education program. A stated need by diggers and those in diamondiferous regions, this portion incorporates a “training of trainers” aspect to build capacity among diverse community leaders in order to bridge the literacy gap and begin to fill the knowledge void of those most affected by extractives practices in their neighborhood. Before I go I’m also finishing-up a “Reclaiming Your

Community Farmland” Toolkit with samples of all relevant documentation, step-by-step instructions and DVD, and important contacts so as to make the reclamation process replicable for any group who might be interested.

The rains have just begun, earlier than usual despite the late arrival of harmattan, and everywhere upcountry are signs of people scrambling to finish waddle-and-daub and mud brick houses before they melt away. I have only three weeks left here and can hardly believe it’s been nearly eight months. Admittedly, I am tired and a bit sick of having my camera and phones stolen, taking a break from being so conspicuous. But looking back, I am a bit floored by all that was beautiful and moving here and how comfortable I’ve become, by the incredibly warm people I’ve been grateful to call friends, and all that I’ve managed to accomplish on a shoestring in a project I have put my all into. I fear I will miss the humidity, epic beaches, friendliness, cassada leaf, meaningful work, and endless intensity of Salone, but that just means I’ll have to come back...



Sobering introductions

"Michelle Villeneuve is the newest One Sky intern to go to Sierra Leone. A student at Royal Roads University studying in a joint program of Environment & Management and Human Security & Peacebuilding, Michelle secured a scholarship through the 'Accelerate BC' program to fund her trip. Prior to this adventure, Michelle has visited nine other African countries with agencies such as Operation Crossroads Africa, Youth Challenge International and Oxfam Quebec, as both volunteer and project manager. Her intention is to continue to work in the international not-for-profit sector at the grassroots level; she may break down and get an office job with the UN when she hits her midlife crisis."

From Michelle's blog

www.michelleinthegamb.blogspot.com

March 26 2009

On the eve of my departure for Sierra Leone, I find my thoughts settling on relatively inconsequential things...excitement over drinking bagged water (I love it, it's wrong, I know), and wondering what the popular songs are in Sierra Leone right now. I'm dreaming of red earth and lush green rainforests with exotic species, each one so interesting and so necessary to the whole. The sights and smells of West Africa, already so familiar, but sure to be surprisingly different in this country that is so new to me.

All this very likely is my brain distracting me from the reality of the unknown...where am I going, what am I doing? I know as much as can be known, but that is nothing compared to reality.

I'm excited, I'm nervous. I'm grateful that I have another One Sky intern picking me up at the Freetown airport! The process of getting me over to Sierra Leone, in this tumultuous year of cancelled funding, has been long, and I can't wait for this dream to come to fruition!



March 31 2009

Today, Larissa and I are spending much of the day holed up at Bliss Patisserie, which is clearly ex-pat central. I came here with designs on avoiding the ex-pat community as much as possible, but how quickly I threw the towel in on that one...not only are these people really nice, and obviously have a lot in common with me, but it's also just who I've been introduced to so far. I expect the balance will shift when we go up-country to Kono. Which will be.... sometime in the next few weeks? Larissa and Sheryle (filmmaker) are leaving on April 19th, and they want to visit the Outamba-Kilimi national park before they go, so it looks like we're heading up there, along with one of the rangers from CSSL (Conservation Society of Sierra Leone, our in-country partner org), on Friday. Yay! It sounds amazing...crocs, hippos, elephants, lions, buffaloes, bongos, chimps, leopards and a bunch of fancy birds...we'll be travelling mostly by canoe within the park...and of course, with Mr. Kamara, one of the chief wildlife experts in Salone as our guide. Should be excellent.

April 1 2009

I'm a bit sobered today...the excitement of past weeks and arrival is wearing off, and reality has some very dark components here. Not to say I'm not ecstatic, or that I'm upset...just missing home a bit, and somewhat overwhelmed by what I've seen in such a short time.

I get a chill every time I see political graffiti- I felt a full on physical shock at seeing 'RUF' tagged on a wall in Freetown. Within about 5 seconds yesterday, Sheryle, Larissa and I had "white scum" and "I love you" shouted at us on the street, and later on my own, a young guy walked by me and hissed "bitch". I'm not taking it personally, I'm just saddened overall..... I really love it here, so I can't explain exactly what is making my heart feel so heavy today, but I'm attributing it to culture shock and general arrival anxiety. No worries, I'm still on top of the world



Nikki Skuce

Changes

I spent almost 7 years with an amazing organization that became a part of me. One, that initially challenged me and provided me with mentorship, that resulted in both personal and professional growth. An organization that then took shape and accumulated accomplishments from the efforts of a great team. It was a place that inspired and encouraged initiative. Even during down times, like lengthy audits and intern incidents, it was infused with humour, integrity and camaraderie.

I loved going to work. I loved the opportunities that were provided to work at multiple scales, to work on both practical projects and policy initiatives, to work in networks and independently, to work at building the capacity of others and providing emerging ground for leadership development, to work on solutions and create positive change.

One Sky is an incredible organization that inspires change. But change is also sometimes needed to allow for further inspiration. After nearly a year of maternity leave, I made the very tough decision to move on from One Sky and take a position with Forest Ethics as an Energy Campaigner. This new position allows me to focus on regional energy issues and feels like the right decision as I struggle to juggle work and a toddler.

My daughter Lucia, now just over one year old, continues to keep me busy. She's started walking and babbles away in her own language that appears to be neither Spanish nor English. She's already showing early campaigning skills - motivation and persistence!

Despite leaving One Sky, I hope to stay engaged and will remain in contact with many of the wonderful friends I had the pleasure of working with overseas and across Canada. I am also leaving with a wealth of skills and experience, and treasure trove of wonderful memories. Thanks to everyone, in particular the man at the helm.

Welcome A-board, Kim Struthers

Kim is new to the One Sky board as of October 2008 and is on a steep, but enjoyable, learning curve. Raised in Smithers, she moved back in 2008 after living in Ottawa and Vancouver for 20 years. She has a BA (Honours) in International Relations from UBC and has spent most of her working years in the public relations, media relations and special event management fields. She loves the outdoors and has been having fun getting reacquainted with northern BC and the mountains in the Bulkley Valley. Travelling is another passion and she is currently in England for three months. She's doing her best to keep up with things from afar but admits to being easily distracted by her surroundings, which inevitably seem to involve a bike ride to a country pub followed by a pint of Guinness...

Success through the struggles

"This is the land we have been fighting for. Today we achieve our goal."

Alice Fengai, Chairlady of the Bandefayie Farmers' Cooperative, surveys a five acre expanse of freshly turned red soil. Until today it was a wasteland of patchy elephant grass sprouting amid deep water-filled pits and compacted tailings piles. Tomorrow the farmers begin planting food crops for the community.

Bandefayie lies in the shadow of a ten-storey pile of sand tailings left by the National Diamond Mining Company – a jointly owned British/Sierra Leone company – when it abandoned the area due to falling production some twenty-five years ago. One Sky has worked with the Farmers' Cooperative since 2004 when we began supporting regular extension visits by local agronomist Michael Aruna then later supplying small agricultural inputs and supporting the development of value added industries. This year, thanks to the remarkable efforts of Organic Agriculture Intern, Larissa Stendie, One Sky was able to once again hire a bulldozer at cost from Swanfield Diamond Mining Company to complete the land reclamation project we began last year.

Larissa is one of three One Sky interns sponsored by CIDA's International Youth Internship Program. Her work is just one of many success stories from the three 2008-2009 interns based in Sierra Leone and Cameroon.

Kim Slater, Ecotourism Development Intern also working with One Sky's partner organization the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone, recognized the need for increased collaboration between Sierra Leone's various

tourism stakeholders including the National Tourism Board, conservation organizations, tour operators and lodges. To bring these various stakeholders together in synergistic collaboration, Kim drew up a strategic framework, raised a whopping \$5000 and single-handedly organized a high profile conference at Freetown's Kimbima Hotel. A website for the organization, operating under the working title of SUSTAIN Salone, can be found at www.sl-ecotravel.net.

Jane Boles, Project Development Assistant at the Limbe Botanic Gardens in the seaside town of Limbe, Cameroon, spent her internship working on various aspects of forest conservation and resource management. She

published a piece on carbon finance for Cameroon's National Strategy an Action Plan (NMSAP) for the Convention on Biological Diversity, She trained LBG staff as well as designed and delivered a series of climate change seminars at local universities discussing the potential role of REDD (Reduced Environmental Degradation and Deforestation) carbon credit schemes on forest conservation in Cameroon. Jane

helped further strengthen LBG's relationship with Global Forest Watch, by conducting in depth research on REDD schemes, and left LBG and local university students with a much richer understanding of climate change issues and their relation to Cameroon's spectacularly diverse forests.

With the various staff transitions at One Sky over the past year, this year's staff and interns have faced unfamiliar challenges. The perseverance, initiative and successful execution of these challenging tasks is a testament to these intern's flexibility and determination. The One Sky staff are impressed their achievements – together with CSSL and LBG staff we look forward to building on their work in the years ahead.



Stories of one, stories of many

One Sky has been involved in bioregionalism since its inception in 2000: Local agriculture in Sierra Leone and later on, in Smithers. Bioregionalism has always seemed to make more sense than globalism when it comes to food systems. Interestingly, I have been thinking of bioregionalism in terms of stories lately and how they can have a powerful influence on our unity as society (or not).

Learning about others' stories is an opportunity to drop my judgement, to develop more compassion, more understanding. However, some stories include views of the world that I will not understand. This may lead to judgement.

One's culture, setting, characters, wildlife, flora will influence the course of the story and let the reader (or listener) understand more about the place. The type of canoes, the oolichan grease. Am I learning anything about the place through the story? Is this a form of bioregionalism?

I wonder if considering stories through the lens of bioregionalism will help me judge more or judge less. Feeling the uniqueness of a particular story will engage my senses and perhaps make me feel what it might be like to be a Temne, a Quechua or a Gitksan. However, it may also isolate the culture I am reading about to a point of making it less accessible for my mind to understand. This might happen if the uniqueness is, well, too unique.

At the same time, many myths, although with very unique bioregional elements, also appear to be very similar to other cultures' myths and stories. The story of the raven stealing the light is very similar to Anancy the trickster spider found in certain African traditions. This provides some comfort: knowing that across cultures, it may be easier to relate to other cultures through similar myths and stories. This may consequently help us judge less.

Aboriginal populations probably feel more united than non-aboriginal populations thanks to stories. I am trying to recall North American myths. I recall none. History yes, stories, no. That might be a cause of judgement. There are not a lot of common stories between us. Colonialism is hardly bonding.

Stories of one

I have recently been introduced to Ada'ox. Ada'ox is a Gitksan word for which there is no easy English



translation. It consists of histories, maps, sagas, symbols, myths, laws, genealogies, etc. The Gitksan guard their ada'ox fiercely. It is their way of life; the way they govern land and people.

The Gitksan land claim court case in the late 1980s, where the hereditary chiefs submitted Ada'ox as evidence to prove the existence of traditional land use was dismissed as a collection of folktales. This meant, among many other consequences, that the province had the right to grant tenures to industry like logging without the Gitksan's consent. The exact same land that the Gitksan used for their livelihood and that would sustain them for many generations. So much hinged on the Ada'ox. Yet it was (and still is) being disputed as non-evidence of land ownership.

Stories of many

The Gitksan 'worldview' was a new one for me until I moved to Smithers. So was their Ada'ox. Thanks to the Gitksan, my neighbours, I have come to appreciate other aboriginal cultures. My compassion (or is it just lack of ignorance?) has enabled me to see beyond my own heritage and feel that I am part of a wonderful web of life that includes all beings, including whales that become wolves. This is much more uniting and provides a sense of community rather than judgement that leads to separation. I would encourage One Sky interns and staff (past and present) to continue to send stories they have heard or read in their travels abroad so that the rest of us, on the board of directors or traveling in different nations, can appreciate and learn in different ways about the peoples they are working with.