

# EDITORIAL

with Dawn Brown

## The reason to celebrate

When my family and I first moved to Acton, my son was only three going on four. We moved from the city to a small town because we thought it would be a nice environment for him to grow up in—and overall, I believe it was. We chose our house in part because of its proximity to an elementary school, and it doesn't feel like it was all that long ago that he and I strolled down the street to register him for junior kindergarten. This year he's turning 18 and is just weeks away from completing his last year of high school. And I'm left feeling more than a little stunned by how quickly those years sped past.

Like many parents, my husband and I have acquired and kept a number paper cards and hand-made gifts from our son's younger years. The Christmas tree ornament he made with his hand print when he was six will forever be my favourite. I use the candy dish he made for me for Mother's Day from a baby food jar and tissue paper when he was five to store paperclips in on my desk, and husband keeps the Father's Day poem our son painstakingly printed in second grade and set behind a hand-painted frame on the edge of his desk. While the cards are no longer hand made but store bought, the gifts no longer made with brightly coloured construction paper, the thought and sentiment remain the same.

Like Mother's Day, Father's Day is an unofficial holiday. It is celebrated in Canada on the third Sunday in June. This year, Father's Day will fall on this Sunday, June 17. Father's Day appears to have made its way to Canada from the U.S. where the first Father's Day was celebrated in Spokane, Washington in 1910.

In some cases, over the years the role of father within the family unit has shifted. While years ago, fathers were the sole providers for their families, mothers the primary nurturers, like anything, these roles have shifted and blended together. These days, with more and more families seeing both parents working, both parents providing for their families, both parents also have become nurturers, as well. And for many, this shift has given many fathers an opportunity to be closer to their children, to know them better than fathers from generations past.

Lately there seems to be a day to celebrate everything, from grandparents to cheese—I'm not kidding, National Cheese Day is June 4 in case you'd like to observe next year—and though it's easy to dismiss holidays like Mother's Day or Father's Day as made up holidays intended for card shops to make money, taking the time to spend with our parents, remembering and acknowledging them is a good thing. Because if life teaches us anything, it's just how quickly the days pass while we're living it.

# SCIENCE MATTERS

By: David Suzuki



## Don't water down marine protection

Will Canada finally inspire a wave of celebration on World Oceans Day, June 8? Prime Minister Justin Trudeau promised to lead G7 nations on global marine protection during Canada's presidency this year, a welcome change after decades of inaction left just one per cent of our oceans formally safeguarded.

The government is charging ahead to meet its 20 international Convention on Biological Diversity conservation targets. Canada met the 2017 goal to increase ocean protection to five per cent and is moving to protect at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas by 2020.

That included creating marine protected areas on all three coasts: Anguniaqvia niqiqyuam in Northwest Territories, Hecate Strait and Queen Charlotte Sound Glass Sponge Reefs in British Columbia, and St. Anns Bank in Nova Scotia. Canada also has two marine conservation areas on Lake Superior and the St. Lawrence River, and two others off B.C.'s northern coast near completion, including Gwaii Haanas.

Canada has the longest coastline in the world, bordering three oceans, but has left many globally significant biodiversity areas without protection. Hudson Bay estuaries host the world's largest beluga whale calving area. More than 55,000 — about a quarter of the world's population — migrate every year from their winter ranges to the mouths of the Seal, Nelson and Churchill rivers. Warm-water estuaries shelter calves and provide fish and shellfish for them to eat. Migratory birds also rely on these estuaries, and the ecotourism benefits for Manitoba further strengthen the protection rationale. Inuit tradi-

tional knowledge about hunting areas for bowhead and beluga whales, narwhal, walrus and polar bears helped identify this area in need of protection.

Effectively safeguarded biodiverse areas limit human activities such as shipping, mining, oil and gas exploration, and destructive fishing practices. Although research shows they should exclude extractive activities, the federal government recently approved offshore oil exploration on Canada's East Coast in an area designated as a marine protected area only a few months earlier.

Ocean conservation can be achieved through marine protected areas, Indigenous conserved and protected areas, marine zones, protected networks, conservancies and "other effective area-based conservation measures." Regardless of the moniker, protection must be based on sound ecological principles and ecosystem needs. Standards must be meaningful and affirm Indigenous rights and involvement in planning and governance.

Many countries — from the U.S. to Brazil to Britain — are creating large marine protected areas to meet international conservation targets. But as the state of overfished, warmer, acidified oceans cluttered with plastics becomes more perilous, some scientists question prioritizing the size of the protected area over its quality.

Drawing lines on a map to meet targets doesn't increase biodiversity. We should create protected areas where science says they're needed most. Some argue it's more effective to focus on smaller areas where fish spawn and feed and where threats from human ac-

tivities are highest.

Coastal waters have a greater diversity of species and face more immediate threats from energy extraction, tourism, development, habitat degradation and overfishing than open oceans. For example, coral reefs cover less than 0.1 per cent of the ocean floor but are home to 25 per cent of all marine species.

Signs of hope for Canada's oceans are emerging. Proposed amendments promise to strengthen Canada's flagship ocean law, the Oceans Act. With growing support for sustainable fishing practices that include using non-destructive gear, fisheries management should shift to targeting only abundant fish and setting clear quotas. There's hope that recently proposed Fisheries Act changes will again secure requirements for fish habitat protection.

Challenges loom on our ocean horizon. All marine life along Canada's Pacific coast is vulnerable to greater risks of oil spills from the sevenfold increase in tanker traffic that would come with the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion. Greater attention must be given to Indigenous rights and meaningful co-governance in marine areas, as is happening in northern and central British Columbia. The 76 remaining resident orcas on B.C.'s South Coast need immediate measures, such as chinook fisheries closures, better stream habitat protections for salmon and reduced shipping noise.

Moving on all fronts to protect oceans couldn't be more important. This World Oceans Day, let's remember they are essential to life, providing most of the oxygen we breathe, along with food for the body and mind.



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