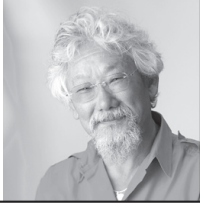


Science Matters

By David Suzuki



Tiny Township sets example

By David Suzuki
with Faisal Moola

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” ~ Margaret Mead

Anthropologist Margaret Mead’s words came to mind when I heard about a recent victory for the citizens of Tiny Township and surrounding communities in Simcoe County, Ontario. The people banded together to stop a garbage dump from being built on one of the purest sources of water on the planet – the Alliston aquifer, a subterranean lake that stretches from Georgian Bay to the Oak Ridges Moraine in southern Ontario.

As well as being the source of drinking water for residents in the region, the aquifer provides cold water to the Wye River and surrounding wetlands. The river and wetlands, in turn, support important wildlife species, including many amphibians, song birds, and fish.

Citizens in the area, including many First Nations, have argued for nearly 30 years that Simcoe County and the provincial government should explore other options to manage the region’s garbage, such as composting programs, upgrades to existing landfills, and improved recycling. Despite those alternatives, local authorities and the Ontario Environment Ministry gave the go-ahead for a solid-waste landfill to be built in and on top of the Alliston aquifer, on a parcel of land known as Site 41.

It’s another clear example of our tendency to ignore the real costs of getting rid of our garbage. We create a lot of solid waste, greenhouse gas emissions, and other forms of pollution, and then we bury them in the ground, dump them into our waters, or pump them into the air and think we can forget about them. In doing so, we fail to take into account the real value of the goods and services that nature provides.

Site 41 became a flashpoint of conflict this summer when area residents peacefully blockaded the landfill site. As the blockade dragged on and the number of people (including elders) being hauled off to jail increased, the “grassroots” struggle to close Site 41 attracted the support of the “grass-tops,” powerful advocacy organizations and unions such as the Council of

Canadians, the David Suzuki Foundation, and the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

I got involved, in part, because I was impressed by the organizing skills, courage, and dedication of the citizens of Tiny Township and local First Nations in trying to protect our most precious resource, our drinking water.

How this dump got approved in the first place boggles the mind. Experts believe that for the landfill to be built at Site 41, as much as 225 million litres of clean groundwater would have to be pumped out and disposed of before construction. Over the life of the landfill, even more groundwater would have to be pumped out to maintain the dump’s structural integrity. Concerns have also been raised about potential long-term engineering problems and landfill leakage that would contaminate the aquifer.

Landfills are often the preferred solution for dealing with garbage because the costs appear low when compared to other methods of waste management and disposal. But they only seem low because we fail to include the very real costs that dumps incur when they degrade the natural services that watersheds, forests, and other ecosystems provide for our health and well-being – like clean air, clean water, and healthy food.

When these natural services are degraded by development activities such as landfills, they must be replaced with expensive substitutes, such as water-filtration plants, dykes, and other engineering. The economic arguments against the Site 41 dump, with its potential to harm the local drinking-water supply, should kill this landfill plan once and for all.

In response to efforts of local citizens, the province and the government in Simcoe County have approved a one-year moratorium on the Site 41 landfill so that further scientific assessments can be done. This shows that people who join together for a common cause really do have the power to affect the decisions of governments and corporations.

The backhoes and other equipment at Site 41 are now silent, at least temporarily. Let’s hope that the politicians continue to listen to the people of Tiny Township and work to find better ways to deal with our waste.



READY TO ROLL: Left to right, Cody, 12, Erika, 6, and Gabriel, 8, were waiting for the 8:13am bus to take them to Sacre Coeur school in Georgetown on the first day, Tuesday, September 8. - Marie Shadbolt photo

Dyno-man’s turtle a puzzle

Every once and a while you meet someone who is interesting yet somehow unexpectedly throws you a really big curve ball, as they say. This time it was a story that keeps you coming back for more.

Friends of ours, the racer girl and her husband Dyno-man, added another dimension to our friendship. I always thought they were nice people with a nice family and well, basically good people, to have as friends. What I didn’t realize was the depth of Dyno-man until I really started paying attention to his stories.

It’s hard to describe Dyno-man in mere words. He is more of a man you need to see to fully grasp. More than once I found myself watching him as it appears he is contemplating the world, yet at the same time carefully choosing his words and topics. There is a lot of thought and thoughts going through his head, I’m sure.



By
Angela Tyler

What threw me for the loop was that Dyno-man has a hobby ...or more-over a non-typical pet. Dyno-man’s prized possession, besides his classic Harley Davidson snowmobile and a helmet he insists Peter Fonda wore in the classic movie Easy Rider, is his turtle Wag. Somehow, the man who can probably build a snowmobile from a pile of scrap metal and make it travel 150 miles an hour can be captivated himself by a turtle he has had for decades.

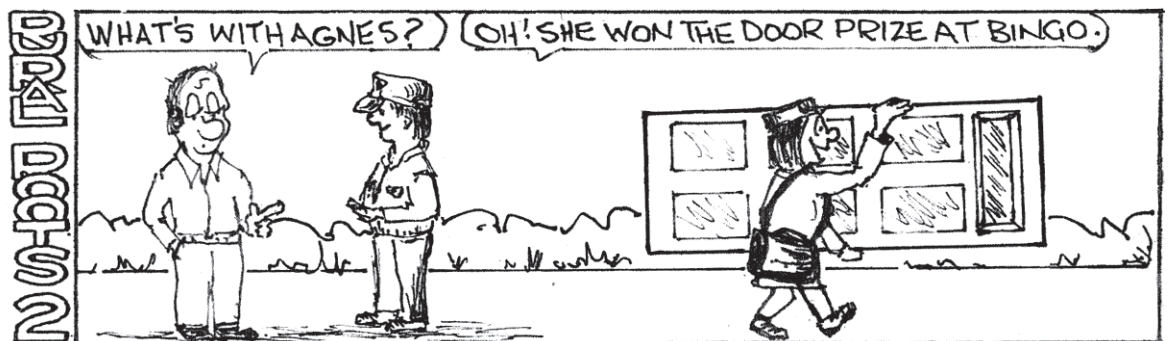
Dyno-man can be sitting there in a conversation about anything and suddenly, all unsuspecting, find the perfect segue to insert a turtle fact or story. Even more amazing than his knowledge of turtles

is how for some reason I, who have never had any real turtle curiosity, have started looking forward to the stories.

The turtle, as they call her, has two homes. One home outside for summer and one inside, specially built. Not just a glass cage, inside for winter. From what I gather though, the turtle also has a little bit of attitude. I personally think she is jealous of racer girl. Racer girl told the story of how she went and bought very expensive water plants for her winter home. Before she knew it the turtle had chopped the plants in half opting for the specially grown plants that Dyno-man had for her.

Dyno-man seems to know exactly how the turtle is feeling. He sympathizes with her aging dilemmas noticing even the smallest of detail when she is “sunning” herself and maybe “off” from her normal stance.

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