

# The Great Lakes: Clean-up and prevention

## Greenpeace tour: A call for zero-discharge

Greenpeace is scheduled to stop in Terrace Bay on August 27 as it tours nearly 40 U.S. and Canadian Great Lakes communities with its boat, the Moby Dick, and bus, the Terrapin.

Greenpeace is conducting the tour to build support for banning persistent toxics in the Great Lakes basin.

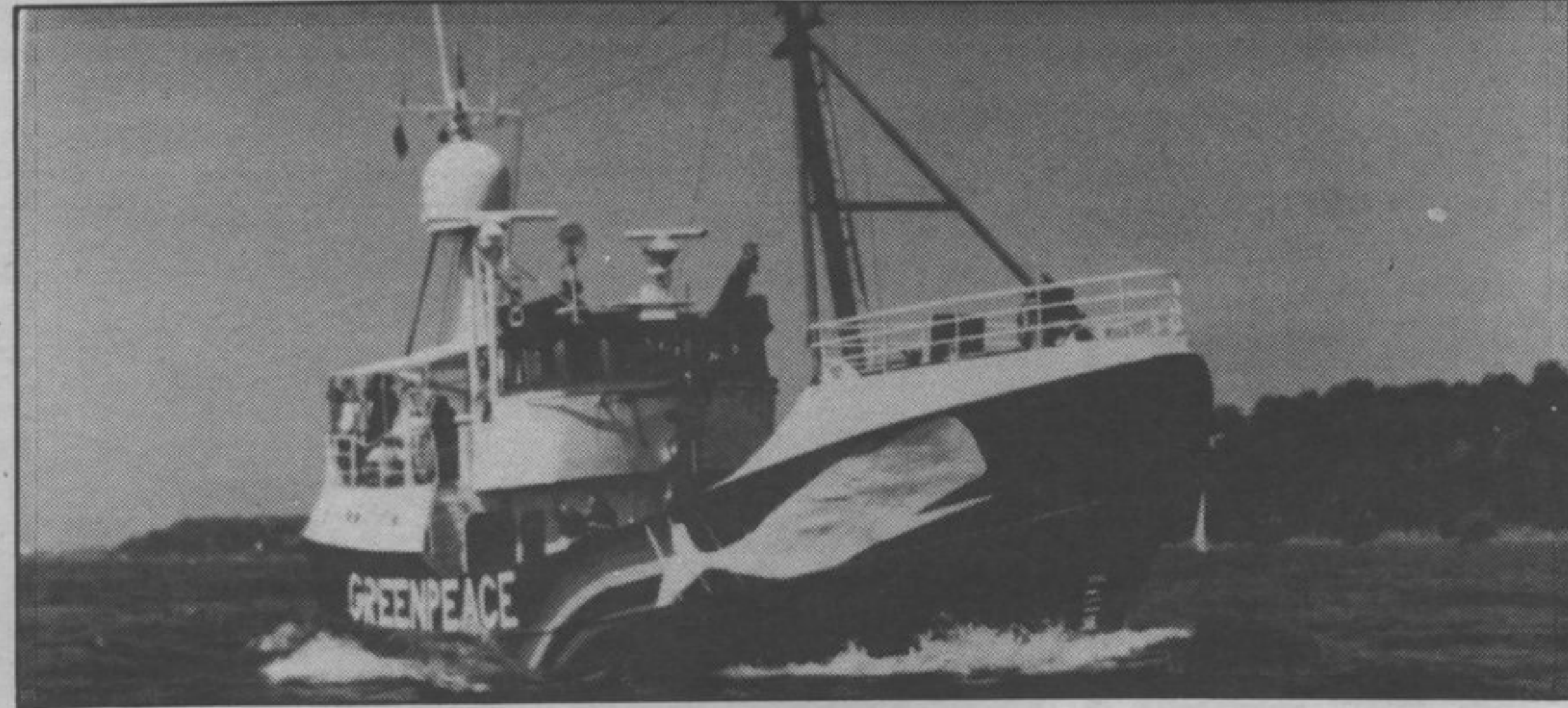
The first stop on the tour will be at the community of Akwesasne (near Cornwall, Ontario), where Greenpeace will be welcomed to the Great Lakes by the Mohawk nation. The Zero Discharge tour culminates ten weeks later in Traverse City, Michigan at the Sixth Biennial meeting of the International Joint Commission (IJC). This meeting is an important bi-national Great Lakes forum to which environmentalists plan to bring the demand for Zero discharge of persistent toxic chemicals.

"It's ridiculous to talk about cleaning up the lakes when we still dump hundreds of tonnes of poisons into them every week," said Jack Weinberg, Great Lakes Project Coordinator for Greenpeace. "No matter how many regulations there are, if you use or produce toxic chemicals, some amount will end up in the lake. Eliminating these chemicals is what this tour is about."

Greenpeace and more than 200 Great Lakes grassroots organizations, local

governments, and environmental organizations have signed the Zero Discharge Statement of Principles, calling for an end to persistent toxic chemical production and use in the Great Lakes basin. Many of these groups and their members will join Greenpeace in Traverse City for the IJC meeting in late September.

Greenpeace has identified three steps



The MV Moby Dick, a 25 meter converted fishing vessel, will tour Great Lakes communities to build support for banning persistent toxics in the Great Lakes basin.

which can be taken immediately to reduce persistent toxic pollution in the Great Lakes:

- \*Phase out chlorine and other chlorine compounds in the pulp and paper industry;

- \*Ban new incinerators in or near the

continued on page 11

## The Great Lakes Action Plan: Three major programs

The Great Lakes Basin contains 20% of the entire world supply of fresh water, is home to 35 million people (35% of the Canadian and 15% of the North American populations) and contains over 800 identified chemicals, only 300 of which scientists know about.

In 1989, the federal government announced the Great Lakes Action

would be the focus of the Plan.

A total of \$50 million was allocated for a Great Lakes Preservation Program. This program brings together the scientific and technological expertise of the federal departments of Environment, Fisheries and Oceans, Agriculture, Transport and Public Works to address Great Lakes Pollution. The program includes research into the behavior of contaminants mixed in water sediments and how the impact plant and fish life; establishing a network with the United States Environmental Protection Agency to provide measurements of the amount of toxics falling into the Lakes, and developing methods to improve the ability to prevent and respond to spills from shipping accidents not only to protect human life by to protect wildlife and habitat.

One program funded under this initiative is the Remedial Action Plan (RAP). A RAP is a clean up plan, designed to restore the water ecosystem to a healthy sustainable state at severely degraded sites around the Great Lakes. RAPs are a joint venture by the federal and provincial governments under the Canada - Ontario Agreement respecting Great Lakes Water Quality.

continued on page 10

# History in the rocks - look, don't touch

Dawn woke Little Bear from a troubled sleep. All night he had been anxious about the approaching special day. He rolled up his sleeping blanket, tucked it into his corner of the family tent, then quickly joined his father, already waiting for him by the canoe, down at the beach.

In silence, father and son paddled across the calm summer water and soon reached the Island of Visions. Little Bear had never been here before, but his brother had been brought here two summers before and had told Little Bear what to expect. He helped his father pull the canoe up on the sloped cobble beach, again without speaking, then walked towards the pit.

Standing together over the shallow, oval-shaped pit, his father began to chant - a low, guttural song deep from within. Little Bear had not heard this song before, but the words were reassuring. The song spoke of animals in the woods, hunting, fishing, and the good luck that comes to hunters who respect the animals' gifts.

Little Bear lay down in the shallow pit, listening to the song. The chant ended with Little Bear's eyes riveted to his father's. After a long silence, his father spoke.

"I will return after four suns," he said. "Let not your hunger distract you from your quest. Only you will know when your spirit has arrived. Be ready, my son."

With one more silent gaze, he was gone. Little Bear heard the scrape of

the canoe leaving the beach, then only the wind. He waited in the silence all day, then counted the stars as they appeared. As the stars went out, he fell asleep. Two days went by like that, with Little Bear only visiting the trees to relieve himself, or to dip his hand in the lake for water.

The spirit came on the third day. An eagle appeared to Little Bear just as the stars came out. When Little Bear's father returned, he found the boy picking rocks and placing them around a small circle drawn on the beach, not far from the pit.

The eyes of father and son met again as Little Bear straightened up. Somehow the boy seemed a little taller. Neither spoke.

The boy, now more man-like, eventually broke the silence. "My name is now Eagle Feather," he said. "Little Bear has gone."

What you have just read is fiction. I imagined this happening two thousand years ago, on a tiny island I recently visited, not far from Cobinosh Island, near Rosport. The archaeologists tell us that Little Bear and his father fished and traded on Cobinosh every summer along with about 200 other Anishanabeg -- the ancestors of the modern Cree and Ojibway.

The vision of Eagle Feather would be the second important ceremony in

his life. The first was his naming ceremony, at birth. This second event, the *Wausssaeyaubindumowin*, or "vision quest", happened during the twelfth or thirteenth summer of an adolescent boy's life. During the vision quest, held on this island not far from Cobinosh, a young boy found his guiding spirit - the entity that would provide his identity and protection for the rest of his life. It would be achieved through four days of fasting, alone in a shallow pit.

The pit is still here, on a commanding rise in the centre of the beach. So are the piles of stones, left behind by generations of vision seekers. I previously visited this beach two years ago, and had been moved by its special spirituality.

The vexing thing about our recent visit was our discovery that this special place had been disturbed. Someone, either a hungry bear or a disreputable human vandal drunk with beer, had dislodged and flipped over many of the stones from where they had been placed two thousand years before. Many of the stones, long ago splattered with multi-coloured lichens, were flipped over indiscriminately, revealing their pinkish underbellies clean of lichens.

At first, I was very sad to see this. Then, I got angry. Who, I screamed to the wind, would be so ignorant, and disturb a precious remnant of a vanished civilization?

I tried to calm myself with the thought that the perpetrator of this crime may not have been human. A starving bear, seeking ants, may very well have flipped over the stones. But if a bear is to blame, why did we not find any bear droppings, or evidence of overturned stones somewhere else on the cobble beach instead of just at the pit, and at the cairns? Rather, evidence pointed to human vandals - a beer can tossed on a forest trail, a garbage bag beside a tree. Had I the tools of a real detective, I would have dusted this evidence for fingerprints, to discover if the fingerprints on the garbage matched any on the special stones.

I have no magic solution to prevent future desecrations like this. I don't even want to name this island, for fear of attracting more goons to do more harm. The Ontario Ministry of Culture is responsible for sites like this. If they put up signs, would that make visitors more respectful? I'm not sure. Signs might make it worse. It also doesn't seem appropriate to put up a fence. Fences would only give a mindless vandal a greater sense of challenge, some kind of sick additional thrill.

My only recommendation is for greater understanding, through education. The local Rosportians who care so deeply about these special places on their local Islands should be given the resources to educate each other and a growing number of visitors about the significance of these special sites and

continued on page 11



**NORTHERN  
INSIGHTS**

by Larry Sanders

