

Local graduate off to Costa Rica

People of Terrace Bay, living on the shore of Lake Superior, and Olive Ridley Sea Turtles, living on the Costa Rican shores' of the Pacific Ocean have nothing in common, or so one might think.

However, beginning this October, this two diverse species will be drawn closer together when biologist Angela Prince arrives in Costa Rica to help study the sea turtles.

Prince, a graduate of Lake Superior High School, 1987 and now a recent graduate of the University of Toronto with a specialist's degree in biology, has been to Costa Rica on two previous occasions.

It was during her first visit to the country in 1990, a field course in tropical insect biodiversity, that she met the people studying the Olive Ridley Sea Turtle.

After the insect biodiversity project finished in the Monte Verde Cloud Forest, the students had time to travel around Costa Rica.

Costa Rica, a small Central American country, holds a wide variety of vegetation types from cloud forests to savannas and deserts, Prince said.

It was one in these areas, the Pacific Lowlands, she met a group of people studying the turtles.

"I thought this was just fantastic," she said.

"They are an endangered species and that in itself is draw.

You see a need where you can help and perhaps be part of saving a species and raising public awareness about what needs to be done to preserve it."

Prince kept in touch with the study group and was eventually told that as soon as she finished her degree there would be a job for her in Costa Rica.

Up to this point all efforts have been focused on the Atlantic Sea Turtle. Very little is known about the Pacific species, the Olive Ridley Sea Turtle.

The turtles nest on the beaches and other than those times they are in the lagoon areas or out on the reefs. Their major predators are sharks and killer whales.

One of the objectives of the study will be to trace the migration patterns of these turtles.

"It is very important if you are going to conserve a species to conserve their whole habitat - not just where they happen to breed," Prince said.

"You really have to know where they spend their life and know their life history which, at this point, we know nothing about."

However, it is known that these turtles are growing fewer in number because of the poaching.

It is very difficult to tell the local people, who make their living from the turtles, (turtle eggs are considered a delicacy and leather is used for handbags etc.) that the western world doesn't want them to do this anymore, Prince

said.

After all, they have been told for a long time that the western world wants these products, she added.

"Now they are told, 'You will make more money by saving them because people will want to come here to see the turtles alive and to see the rain forest standing,'" she said.

"It's very hard to change the way of thinking but that is what we have to work on."

Judging by comments local people have made to her during both of her previous visits, Prince believes Costa Ricans would rather make money from their resources without destroying them.

"Some of them were foresters and are now leading tours in the jungle and they are much happier about it, she said.

During her first visit to Costa Rica, Prince was in Monte Verde Cloud Forest with 12 other Canadian University students.

"I was very apprehensive, but as soon as you set foot in the rain forest you feel like Alice in Wonderland - everything is so huge - there is so much life it's overwhelming."

Each of the students had their own project to complete for the field course and Prince did an aquatic biodiversity study comparing the effects of a man-made disturbance and a natural disturbance.

She carried out tests above and below a waterfall, a natural disturbance, and above and below organic discharge coming from a local cheese factory.

"I was interested to see just what was in the river naturally and the effect this organic discharge had on species distribution."

Below the waterfall she found 70 species, including a new species of water beetle. Below the organic discharge she found only six or seven species, all rat tail maggots, leaches and types of parasitic worms.

Prince described them as simple organisms low on the evolutionary scale compared to the fresh water crabs, dragonfly and damselfly larvae and all the other types of larvae found above the factory discharge area.

The local people were very concerned about the students findings and wanted to do something, within their means, to change the situation.

"One of the things which is easy to eliminate are the thermal conditions," Prince explained.

"When I returned in February they had holding tanks that allowed the effluent to cool. That has already had some pronounced affect on the environment around the discharge."

Studying the Olive Ridley Sea Turtle will be an ongoing project.

"I am still very excited to be part of the team even if it is just for one year," Prince said.

No change for north in Rae's agenda

One year ago David Peterson cynically tried to win another majority by calling an early election. Liberal polls conducted by Martin Goldfarb told Peterson he had 50% voter support - more than the Liberals had in 1987, when they won a record 95 seats. Peterson gambled that it was better to hold an election in the summer of 1990, before the recession set in too deeply.

The latest book on that calamitous miscalculation, "Not Without Cause: David Peterson's Fall from Grace", weaves together an enormous compendium of interviews to point fingers of blame at nearly every aspect of the Liberals' campaign. Graham Murray's book review in the Globe and Mail says it well: "...the Ontario Liberal Party has not really comes to terms with what happened, and why. This book should prompt the needed catharsis within the (Liberal) party."

But what about the "catharsis" within Ontario? We now are living with a government learning on the job at our expense. On the first anniversary of his victory, Bob Rae said, "We have come to terms with being a government." Rae has weathered his first year, publicly laden with cabinet hassles, a major recession and policy reversals - most notable his decision not to proceed with a cornerstone NDP promise: public auto insurance.

But under the surface of these public predicaments, there is a dangerous, lingering malaise - a decline in confidence

somewhat rooted in the unavoidable separation that occurs every time a party takes power - between the party rank and file and the government. Some party members are alienated by policy reversals or delays, like dropping public auto insurance or dithering over environmental reforms. Others are personally disenchanted when they are passed over for appointments after years of faithful party service. Those in power argue they must be pragmatic, and take into account not just voices within the party, but



NORTHERN INSIGHTS

by Larry Sanders



also the realities of an empty treasury and the voices of interest groups outside the party. Such a falling out between a party's membership and those in government has historically been unavoidable. It's happened to Liberals like David Peterson and Pierre Trudeau, Conservatives like Joe Clark, the Parti Quebecois under Rene Levesque, and the NDP in Saskatchewan under Allan Blakeney.

But in Ontario, our malaise runs deeper than that. Peterson was thrown out and Rae as swept in on a vortex of rising expectations and voter disenchantment. Rae must now contend with a form of alienation that runs far deeper than just the usual one between the party faithful and a government. Rae must contend with a more fundamental disaffection between the governed and

the governing.

The litany of voter complaints is well known, with higher taxes and economic uncertainties topping the list. In northern Ontario, voters' expectations of Rae's government are particularly high. The north historically voted NDP - even during long periods of Conservative and Liberal rule. One year ago, northerners rejoiced in the appointment of a record number of northerners to cabinet, expecting our concerns to top the provincial agenda. But during the NDP's first year, northerners have not witnessed any dramatic changes in policy or even a northern emphasis in Rae's agenda.

The only exception is native issues. They've moved up Rae's priority list to the point where a political accord has been inked with First Nations, requiring Rae and all future governments to deal with First Nations "on a government to government basis". But native leaders are now questioning whether this recognition is more theatre than substance. The Chiefs of the Poplar Point and Fort William First Nations have both recently challenged the NDP government's sincerity. In Poplar Point's case, it was a dispute over a small-scale hydro project. In Fort William's case, it was over the possible storage of PCBs at Abitibi-Price. In neither case did the First Nation leaders feel they were treated

any differently by the province, despite Rae's rhetoric and the newly-inked accord.

Beyond native issues, northerners have witnessed a government more reactive than proactive. Threatened closures in Kapuskasing, Elliot Lake and Sault Ste. Marie, along with actual closures in Thunder Bay, Atikokan and Ignace have given Rae's government little time to breathe. Shelley Martel, the Minister of Northern Development, told me in a recent interview, "I think the lesson for us (from events like Kapuskasing) is that the government can act as a broker, and can work with all of the various partners to put together the best possible deal under the circumstances."

But that's nothing new. Conservatives, under Bill Davis, can claim they acted as a "broker" when they convinced Stelco to keep the mine in Ear Falls open one more year, to give the community and the province time to plan. Liberals, under David Peterson, can claim "broker" status by their actions in Temagami.

Governments are by definition brokers, sticking band aids on problems long enough to move on to the next crisis. It's disheartening that the NDP has taken a whole year to appreciate this "broker" role played by any government, and failed to come up with a more comprehensive, proactive set of economic strategies for northern

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