

WINTER 2008

BUILDING

Bridges

INSIDE

Connecting to Justice

Quenching the thirst,
accessing the right to water

A Tribute to Ed Carson

Are you Hungry?

A look at food



A CHANGE FOR CHILDREN PUBLICATION



It has been four years since Change for Children published the last Building Bridges issue on the topic of water. It was at this time, that the first Water Project implemented in Nicaragua with partner Centro Humboldt, had just gotten underway.

This issue is also focused on water and the environment and intends to share the incredible results that have been accomplished to improve water access and health since the time of the last issue.

In four years, 73 rural Nicaraguan communities have, or are participating in, the Change for Children Water Projects and these projects have tremendously improved

the lives of over 25,000 people. These results demonstrate that we can positively “shape our world”, which is a key focus of our current public engagement work. We know that the world can be transformed when there is long term commitment, awareness, creativity and support. An abstract concept becomes concrete reality.

I had the opportunity to visit some of the beneficiaries of both Wells I and Wells II projects this past July and what is apparent in each one of these communities is their awareness that a group of supporters in Canada who, while miles away, deeply care about the health and well being of these Nicaraguan communities. A true relationship has been built while it cannot be easily measured, **deeply caring about the lives of others**, is one of the most incredible results of all.

This active caring makes me also think immediately about Ed Carson, a founding member of CFCA, who passed away this year. He taught hundreds of people, the importance of building relationships and he fought tirelessly for the rights of all people. This issue includes a tribute to his life and his compassion and a reminder to continue his legacy.

This holiday season I want to thank all of our international partners, volunteers, board members, and supporters for making our work possible and more importantly for caring so much about the lives of others.

— FIONA CAVANAGH

PROGRAM MANAGER – EDUCATION AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



Access To Water
Wells project improves lives
Page 3



Raise Your Voice
A Global Leadership Weekend
Page 6



Remembering Ed Carson
His spirit lives on
Page 7



Exploring the Global Food Crisis
Page 8



A Story of Giving
Page 10

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e-Newsletter

To subscribe to Change for Children's monthly electronic newsletter email us at cfca@change4children.org



Thank you

to all volunteers, and supporters who have contributed to Change for Children in 2008. Thank you to those who supported the Video Conference for Hope 2008, the 2nd Annual Joffrey Lupul Charity Golf Tournament, the Annual Development Dinner, Rural Roots Youth Conference and Leadership training and the many other events that are improving the lives of individuals, families, and communities around the world.

Quenching the Thirst :

Making access to water a reality



Four years have passed since we dedicated our December 2004 issue of *Building Bridges* to Water. In that issue, Ed Carson reported on his visit to some of the 20 Nicaraguan communities chosen to receive year-round access to clean water and complementary health and hygiene programs. Two years later, in the summer of 2006, Ed and his wife Maria-Elena visited most of the 20 communities that had benefited from the **first Rural Community Water Project in Nicaragua**. I can still hear Ed's passionate recollections and on a high note, we welcomed the **second Water Project**.

In 2006, CFCA began Project II with the continued support of the Bishop Croteau Charitable Foundation, the Frank Flaman Charitable Foundation, and many generous donors. CIDA once again provided 3/4 of the budget. Our Nicaraguan NGO partner, Centro Humboldt, provided excellent project execution and community building skills.

Now at the end of the Project II, we applaud the impressive accomplishments of these four years: Potable water systems for 73 communities in northern Nicaragua. With pride we note the project provided far more than clean water to 25,000 people. Centro Humboldt and the indomitable Nicaraguans remained true to the project's holistic vision of environmental protection and preservation as well as the promotion of water as a human right, not only within the periphery of the 73 communities but also throughout and beyond Nicaragua.

Through local water committees, the population can measure, regulate, and, if need be, ration water consumption to ensure sustainability of the resource. Local water committees form part of a national coalition of advocates for local control of water resources and are responsible for well and water system maintenance and the implementation of health and hygiene campaigns in their communities. These local responsibilities are financed through small user fees, creating a truly a self-sustainable project!

Humboldt's holistic vision includes measures to preserve the fragile water table in drought-stricken northern Nicaragua. Each well site is heavily reforested to maintain the water table. To help slow deforestation, low-wood consumption ceramic stoves with chimneys are distributed in each community. These highly efficient stoves use 1/4 the amount of wood used by traditional adobe models. The chimneys vastly improve the health of women and children who are no longer subjected to a kitchen full of smoke.

Most importantly, Project II provided resources for Centro Humboldt to participate in the drafting and consultation process for Nicaragua's new water law, which leaves control of the precious resource in the hands of local people and

...continued on page 4



Bishop Denis Croteau visits water project in Nicaragua in July 08.

empowers local water committees to manage the water resource locally.

The project provides training to enable municipalities to manage their own water resources in an environmentally sustainable way, and on October 22, 2008, the Coalition of Organizations for Water Rights and the Centre for Research on Water Resources of Nicaragua, together with Engineers Without Borders, launched the book *The Right to Water*.

Remarkably, in the last four years, we have seen Nicaraguans tackle all three of the crises Maude Barlow identifies in her new book *Blue Covenant: The Global Water Crisis and the Coming Battle for the Right to Water*: dwindling freshwater supplies, inequitable access to water, and corporate control of water.

Nevertheless, Nicaragua is still a very poor country and many communities still lack safe water, so we need you to join us in **the third Water Project**. Humboldt's award-winning model for the implementation of water projects in northwestern Nicaragua, complete with political advocacy to keep control of water resources in the hands of citizens, is something we want to duplicate in other countries. Our current submission to the Canadian International Development Agency proposes implementing this model in Sierra Leone and Nicaragua simultaneously, with consultation between NGO partners in these two developing nations. The Tamaraneh Society in Sierra

Leone will benefit greatly from the lessons learned in Nicaragua. Using the innovative techniques developed in Nicaragua, the Tamaraneh Society will ensure its water project is successful and sustainable. **To ensure this third project will be financed, CFCA requires the continued commitment of the water project supporters as well as new partners.** Why not get together with your friends and buy your own well? It is a great investment in our planet and a wonderful show of support for the courageous people of Nicaragua and Sierra Leone!

Unfortunately, while some see access to fresh water as a human right, others want to treat it as a private resource to be traded on the world market. In Canada, we see increased pressure on our municipalities to privatize water through public-private partnerships. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund exert similar pressures on the developing world, where people fight to keep water services public, including in Nicaragua where public demands forced the government to

cancel its secret plans for the privatization of municipal water services.

Over the last years, 236,485 Canadians signed the **Water: Life before Profits** declaration asking the Canadian government to declare water a human right. Although Canada hasn't signed on yet, there are encouraging signs. Maude Barlow (recently appointed as the United Nation's first senior advisor on water issues) reports there is some progress at the United Nations and many countries have confirmed the right of water for all through domestic legislative changes. By signing on and by contributing to Water Project III, we will confirm in words and actions our commitment to clean water rights for all. ■

Cecily Mills holds a PhD in Microbiology from the University of Alberta. She spent seven years in Central America with Witness for Peace. Cecily was honored at the CFCA Development Dinner 2008 for her outstanding contribution and active citizenship. Cecily will travel to El Salvador in early spring to act as an election observer in the general and presidential elections there.

Thank you to the many donors who have contributed to ensuring that access to clean water is a right to all. Consider supporting the *Water Project III* that will reach new communities in Nicaragua and Sierra Leone.



An Innovative Approach

In addition to promoting access to water as a human right, CFCA's water projects implement a holistic version of environmental protection, preservation and sustainability. Through the establishment of water committees in each beneficiary community, the population is able to measure and regulate consumption to ensure the sustainability of the resources.

The water committees are part of a national coalition of advocates for local control of the water resource. They are also responsible for well and water system maintenance, and health and hygiene campaigns in their communities, which they finance through charging small user fees.

User fees, while initially controversial, have been successful at ensuring that water is valued by community members and that water is not wasted or that members do not use too much. The fees collected are used for maintenance and improvements of the water system.

This project also provided resources for Centro Humboldt to participate in the drafting and consultation process for *Law 620*, Nicaragua's new water law which leaves control of water in the hands of local people and ensures community management of it.

Raise Your Voice: Global Leadership Weekend



October 18-19, 2008

Peace River, AB

"Discovering leadership. Friendship. Passion for peace and social justice. Change. Tackling global issues. Sparking local movements. Breaking down barriers. Turning apathy on its head. Turning fear into creative energy. Moving bodies and forces. Challenging old ways. Ideas planted as seeds. Inspiring ready minds. Raising social responsibility. Raising young voices. Speak up, step up...take action!"

From October 18-19, 2008, over 20 young people and 10 youth facilitators came together in the northern community of Peace River, AB, to talk about leadership and social justice in their communities and around the world. Students from schools in Eaglesham and Fairview travelled to Peace River High School to share in an incredible educational experience and fun filled weekend.

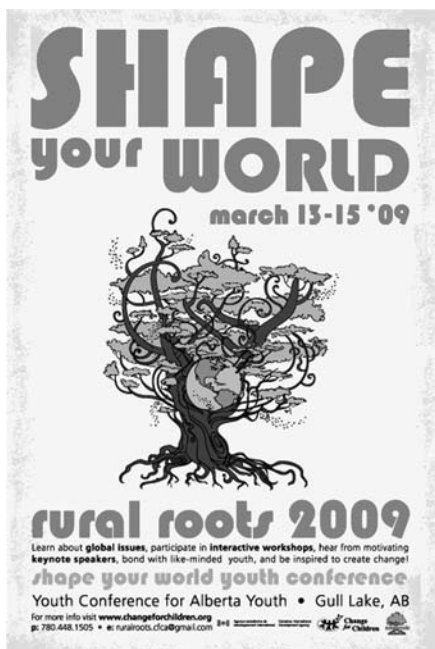
Raise Your Voice: Global Leadership Weekend exposed youth to a variety of global and local environmental issues, with presentations on natural disasters in Central and South America, nuclear power, urban gardening and permaculture, and the effects of climate change on HIV-AIDS prevalence worldwide.

The Activist's Tool Kit challenged participants to discover their skills and resources in taking action on an issue of importance. Groups focused on emission control, mass food production, low-voter turn out amongst youth, and the pine beetle epidemic, and worked through the stages of advocacy, working with the media, promoting to their schools and communities, and event planning.

Participants, facilitators, and teachers all walked away from the weekend feeling a strong sense of community, excitement, and social awareness.

"Every time I come away from Rural Roots, I feel so inspired that these young people are getting involved and active in their communities, and learning about global issues at such a young age." - Mike Glazier, Facilitator, Global Projects Coordinator (Grant MacEwan Students' Association)

Change for Children is looking for individuals, or businesses who are interested in supporting Albertan youth to attend our upcoming Shape Your World Youth Conference in March 2005. Please contact Fiona Cavanagh at Change for Children Association for more information. See full poster on back cover.



A Tribute to Edward Carson

(1958-2008) – Champion of Human Rights

Ed first became involved with Change for Children in 1979. A teacher with a focus on special education, he spent two years in Nigeria before traveling to Nicaragua in 1984, during the years of the Sandinista revolution and at the height of the Contra War. In Nicaragua, Ed made a connection with the people - especially the children - that continues to this day. Ed has changed the lives of many people from Alberta to Nicaragua. His work continues today because he passed on his passion for and commitment to the rights of all children to so many people. What follows are some tributes and reflections.

“When people look back on life to see who has had the most profound impact, rarely do they come up with a single name. Yet the number of candidates is always small, four or five perhaps. When people ask me this question, the answer has over the past twenty years been surprisingly consistent. And of the people on my list, the one name that is always there is Ed Carson.” **BILL HOWE, EDMONTON, AB**

“There are many stories that have become lore among Change for Children supporters fortunate enough to spend time with Ed, either in Canada or on one of his frequent trips to Nicaragua: Children streaming out of homes and alleys to run after Ed's truck, happily shrieking, "Eduardo! Eduardo!" as he drives down the dusty roads of Managua's barrios. Ed feigning a broken leg, complete with full leg cast, on a flight to Nicaragua so he could bring a much-needed wheelchair to the capital. Ed dancing feverishly, twisting a laughing child around at one of the many parties of the projects to which he dedicated his life.” Excerpt from article written by **SCOTT HARRIS, EDMONTON, AB**

“Ed's energy and spirit will live on in the hearts of the kids who were fortunate enough to have met him during his time in Nicaragua; I know that the sound of his voice calling out the window of his kid-filled truck is a permanent part of my memory - and to this day remembering that brings a smile to my face.” **REBEKAH SEIDEL, RIMBEY, AB**

“Ed made a huge impact on the work of INPRHU. He was the most recognized person in Managua - not only among the children but also among the shop owners, bus drivers, and all of the people in the markets that made up the environment of the children.” **FANNY ACEVEDO – INPRHU, NICARAGUA**

“I went to Nicaragua on a CFCA youth tour in 1998 and worked with CFCA's project partners in the barrio and saw firsthand the social inequalities that exist in Nicaragua. Since I came home I have been forever changed, working for social justice in a variety of different ways. Ed Carson was in Nicaragua at this time and he has greatly influenced who I am today. His passion for social justice is highly contagious and has greatly impacted me, my life choices, and general life path.” **LAURA ROBERTS, EDMONTON**



Change for Children is accepting donations for the Ed Carson Legacy Fund to continue Child Rights work with three Nicaraguan organizations that Ed was so passionate about: Pajarito Azul (Blue Bird Centre), FUNARTE (Foundation ART!) and INPRHU (Institute for Human Promotion).

CFCA hopes with your help, to raise an amount that is significant in keeping with the contribution that Ed has made in his lifetime.

Need and Greed

Exploring the Global Food Crisis



Sue Johnstone works with environmental monitoring for Alberta's Ministry of Environment. She graduated from the Global Resource Systems program at the University of British Columbia in 2003

Food riots in Haiti, Eastern Europe, and even resource-rich nations like Brazil and the United States; grain prices at historical highs as nations debate the merits of biofuel; variable crop yields and extreme weather events highlighting climate changes that impact the planet's ability to grow food: as events unfold on the global stage, many realize that eating is an act with ecological and political ramifications.

Eating choices also have social justice consequences. The World Food Program states that, for the first time, the world is moving further from “Millennium Development Goal 1—to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.” Eight hundred million people are now hungry and billions more are negatively impacted by increased food prices.

Much has been said about the current global food situation. In mainstream media, the crisis is almost always described as a very complex problem with multiple root causes and few solutions. Immediate causes are easy to trace—poor weather conditions, high fuel prices, increased meat consumption, low national food reserves, and speculation in the biofuel and grain futures markets.

Just as shifts in global money markets have exposed the fallibility of the current economic paradigm, recent events show the vulnerability of our food system to economic and environmental conditions. Rebuilding a food production model that achieves humanitarian and ecological sustainability is a challenge for us all.

Out of Balance – The Food System at a Glance

Food systems are essentially a sequence of energy. Plants take up nutrients, minerals, and elements, returning these components to the soil in a cycle of decomposition and growth. Harvesting removes this energy from the immediate local system. In an exporting region, energy is removed permanently. Food, fuel, and fiber require resources to manufacture and transport.

In a complex interconnection of imports and exports and consumption patterns, the world-wide energy balance has become increasingly uneven. Dominant scientific paradigms promote the “one-size-fits-all” approach of agricultural “inputs” (most commonly chemical fertilizers) to restore energy imbalances. As farmers seek yield improvements, they become more and more dependent on imported inputs to replace that which has been removed. The manufacture and transport of these products require still more resources. Conversely, local food systems use available local technology and resources to augment crop growth, increasing resiliency and self-reliance.

Digging Deeper – Root Causes

Beginning with the “Green Revolution,” large corporations developed a vertically-integrated agricultural system that sells and owns genetic material, seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, land, cattle, and meatpacking plants. The same companies have responded to Western demand for organic products and “health” foods, consolidating parallel markets.



Ironically, food aid is linked to grain prices on international markets, not to the needs of hungry people. This link has contributed to a practice known as “dumping”. When grain prices are high (usually indicating a low global supply), traders wish to sell on the open market. If prices are low (when grain is in large supply), traders sell grain as “food aid.”

Seeds of Hope – Local Solutions to a Global Problem

Food is a reflection of the history, environment, and knowledge of cultures and peoples. Visitors to a new country or culture often look forward to trying the local recipes and ingredients. The cultural and environmental context in which local food is grown may also hold solutions to the growing global crisis.

Communities and individuals around the world are recognizing that the same old policies and technologies will not be enough to tackle the problem. Small farmers have organized to share knowledge and experience. They advocate for a food sovereignty model-the right to define food, farming, labour, and land policies within appropriate local contexts. Food sovereignty also guarantees people the right to produce food and to have access to necessary resources like seeds, land, and water.

The relationship between farmers and consumers is more critical than ever. Just as farmers require creativity and knowledge to grow food, consumers must also be active participants in a new vision of food production and consumption. ■

What can you do?

- Consider your own energy needs in food consumption. Minimize food waste and teach children to do the same.
- Make food choices that require less energy in their production and transport. Local foods support local farmers, are often superior in nutrition and quality, and reduce the energy imbalance world-wide. Many food “activists” practice the buying hierarchy of local first, then fair trade, then organic.
- Learn as much as you can about what you are eating. Where does it come from? How? Vote with your “food dollars” by supporting producers and products that reflect your values.
- Support and promote self-reliance, interdependence, and knowledge related to food systems. Learn to grow, cook, and preserve food. Share knowledge with others-including children. Encourage actions that provide and protect local production and knowledge and decrease dependence on imported agricultural inputs or “one-size-fits-all” solutions.
- Think outside the (big) box- Research potential sources of food outside of the supermarket. From a neighbour's apple tree to farmers' markets-alternative sources of food are closer than you think!
- Celebrate diversity of food: shapes, colours, sizes and varieties. Learn about creative agricultural methods and technologies that have been shaped by diverse ecology, culture, and history.

Contribute to solutions in BOSAWAS

A microcosm specifically related to the larger themes in this article can be seen in Bosawas, Nicaragua. Child malnutrition rates (2006) in BOSAWAS are 28.3% of children have chronic malnutrition and 11.9% of children have severe chronic malnutrition. A 2006 Institute of Health and Community Development study on **nutrition and food security** in the indigenous territories of MITK and MSB found that 'the communities of MITK and MSB live in food insecurity and nutritional insecurity because of the lack of availability and permanent access to the quantity and quality of food necessary for nutrition and health' (p. 5). Consider a donation to support the work of Change for Children with the indigenous peoples of this region.

It's the feeling that counts...

and that good feeling can have lasting positive results



When hurricane Stan hit Guatemala in 2005, the already economically challenged area of Comitancillo was devastated. Buildings, homes and roads were washed away and with them, opportunity and security that they held. Since that time CFCA financed the construction of three new schools with donations generously provided from across the country. The community members themselves provided much of the labour, facilitated by CFCA Guatemalan partner organization AMMID.

"We can never re-pay you for what you have done for us here, we can only ensure that our children get a good education and work to improve the living conditions of the Mayan people as a whole. In so doing we are fulfilling your dream and ours: a better future for our children"
- Parent of grade one student in Cuatro Caminos school.

It is heart warming comments like this that Colleen Moore-Kilgannon reflects on throughout the year. Last Christmas she and her fellow teachers invited their students to consider an alternative to buying a present. Her

story demonstrates how a different kind of giving can be much more rewarding, with lasting results and all the good feeling that is associated with traditional gifts. Here is Colleen's story:

I have always felt that the money spent on teachers at Christmas could be redirected to benefit more than just one person. So last year, my colleagues and I put out a request to our students and their parents to consider a new gift-giving tradition. As a peripheral goal, we felt that it had the potential to benefit our students by introducing them to a new level of gift-giving. Its main goal, of course, was to benefit children in other communities.

We started with a small paragraph in the November newsletter describing the projects we wanted to support. Being a Spanish bilingual school, we chose Change for Children's *Guatemala School Construction project* as one of our gift beneficiaries. The school secretary agreed to collect the donations, and each family filled out a card for their child's teacher to let them know about their gift. The child then presented the card to his/her teacher instead of a present.

My students placed their gift cards in my mailbox, and I was intrigued to see that in the absence of a present, students were very keen to know if I

had seen their donation card. It actually seemed to be more important to them than when they had left a real gift in my mailbox! It was remarkable how the main focus of the students shifted away from the gift itself to the act of giving, both to me and to other children and their families.

After Christmas, conversations with parents revealed that they were quite pleased with how the new gift-giving tradition went. I was very moved by the wonderful support that our project received from families, and especially by the attitudes of the students. In the end, the first step towards a new tradition at our school went very well. I look forward to continuing with it this Christmas, and hopefully being able to expand it to my second school!

Change for Children is fundraising for many important projects including another school in the Comanticillo region of Guatemala. Please visit our website or call our office to see how we can support you, your family, school or business in making a shift to a new gift giving tradition that will improve the lives of communities for years to come. ■



Change the world
Is it on your holiday list?



Let your gift-giving honour those you care about
and contribute to world-changing solutions

GIFTS THAT CHANGE THE WORLD

Edmonton-based Change for Children has championed human dignity, healthy communities and global justice with the passionate support of Canadians for over 30 years.

Change for Children's *Gifts of Human Dignity* are meaningful tributes that build solutions for international poverty. Share the joy of gifts that provide clean water, access to education, and healthcare where it is most needed. Share the joy of helping to improve the lives of children, their families and communities.

Personalize the card of your choice with your own message and change someone's world this holiday.

www.changeforchildren.org



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Annual Report
2008
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The CFCA 2008 Annual Report is available for download at www.changeforchildren.org, or pick up a print version at the Change for Children office.



Change for Children's Annual Open House

December 5, 2008, 5:00–11:00 pm at the Change for Children office

Refreshments provided. Celebrate with us!

**Human Dignity,
Healthy Communities,
Global Justice**

CHANGE FOR CHILDREN ASSOCIATION (CFCA) is an Edmonton based non-governmental organization with a thirty-two year history of supporting sustainable grass roots community development in Latin America and Africa and a vibrant Global Education Program in Canada.

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