

## CLIMATE CHANGE CHRONICLE 22

### Watching Ducks

During the summer my wife and I downsized our possessions and moved into a smaller home. A small pond lies a few yards from our back door. Our favourite pastime is watching the life on and around that pond.

From our second floor studies we both look down and see ducks swimming happily in the water. And there is also another welcome guest—Harry. Harry is a great blue heron. He shows up periodically to watch for fish and stands on the edge of the pond right below my window. Along with some of our pond-side neighbours, we attract hummingbirds by providing them with food all winter.

On the other side of the pond is a walking path that leads to a very large forest. It is filled with hiking trails. Invariably most of the people we see walking along the other side of the pond are with their dogs. Most days I go for a walk under the tall Douglas firs on those same trails.

The people, the ducks, the dogs, the hummingbirds and the trees all inspire me a great deal. As readers of these chronicles will know, one of the things I write about is the need to find a way to relate to the living world and to other species that share the Earth with us humans. I find all the creatures in my personal world to be a real source of encouragement. Not everything I think about is so heartening.

In my office I have two large bookcases. Many of the books are about nature, the environment and Indigenous cultures. There are some books about the theology of Earth, numerous books on systems and on the economy. There are also some books on Earth law, various versions of the Bible and numerous books on the New Cosmology—books by Teilhard de Chardin, Thomas Berry, Brian Swimme, Mary Evelyn Tucker, John Grim and others.

I try to read books that are inspiring. But in the book case on the wall directly across from my reading chair there is one book that is depressing. It has a yellow jacket, ( my good colour. I'm quite colour blind) that screams out at me. The book is *The Sixth Extinction* by Elizabeth Colbert. I kept thinking I should put that book somewhere else so I wouldn't continually see it, but I figured that wouldn't be fair.

Next to the book case there is a very large coloured poster of twenty-five inukshuks in different Arctic locations. I've worked in all the communities in Nunavut and spent years flying over the frozen Arctic. When I looked down at the vast expanse of wilderness below me, I continually wondered how the Inuit could have lived and thrived for centuries in such a seemingly barren and forbidding world. It gives me hope that somehow we will be able to deal with the climate destruction that lies ahead of us.

Above the posters are two photos of my wife and myself in our younger years. The smiling young man with dark hair and glasses is tilted back in an office chair. His fingers are locked behind his head and his arms are stretched out like wings as if he didn't have a worry in the world.

Finally there is my desk with a computer, a printer, and photos of my grand-children . This is where I spend most of my day—doing research on climate change and writing these chronicles. Deep in thought I often look up and see a picture of my friend and mentor, Thomas Berry. He is smiling and looking down at me. I think of him every day. He, along with the Indigenous elders in the Arctic, are the ones who inspired me and helped me find my calling to write about and work to deal with the climate changing world moving in on us.

I have a bad back so I stand up quite regularly to wander around and look out the window at the ducks. And as I see them and Harry and the dogs and the humming-birds I often think of the words Thomas Berry wrote as the dedication to his book, *The Great Work: Our Way Into the Future*.

To the children

To all the children

To the children who swim beneath

The waves of the sea, to those who live in

The soils of the Earth, to the children of the flowers

In the meadows, and the trees in the forest, to

All those whose children roam over the land

And the winged ones who fly with the winds,

To the human children too, that all the children

May go together into the future in the full

Diversity of their regional communities.

-Mike Bell, Comox Valley Climate Change Network

*Note. CLIMATE CHANGE AND EARTH SPIRITUALITY DISCUSSIONS. Beginning on March 13 and continuing over the next 5 consecutive Wednesdays in March and April we will be holding a small group discussion over lunch. The sessions will take place at the Comox United Church, 250 Beach Drive, Comox. They will start at 11:45 AM and end at 1:00 PM. Bring your own lunch. If you are interested please contact me. My phone number is 250-890-3671; my email is [mikefbell@shaw.ca](mailto:mikefbell@shaw.ca)*

