



the co-creator

a newsletter for collaborative creators | visit us at ecovillages.ca

Issue 1 of 6

What will we create together?

As a limited-run newsletter, this publication will focus on introducing the emerging “co-creative” lifestyle and present observations and facts about the benefits this lifestyle affords. It also aims to connect people and communities whose paths are following the global transition to a carbon negative community. Inside you will find not only opinion, but reporting of those who have pioneered the way as well as highlights on members active in this new, emerging community.

We feature topics including ecovillages, housing, permaculture, off-grid technology, children and more. With an aim to educate about new technology, techniques, initiatives as well as available grants and loans, we want to bring awareness that eases the transition.

Our net goal is to cultivate a favorable environment for the growth of climate resilient, food secure communities in Manitoba.

*What
is an
ecovillage?*

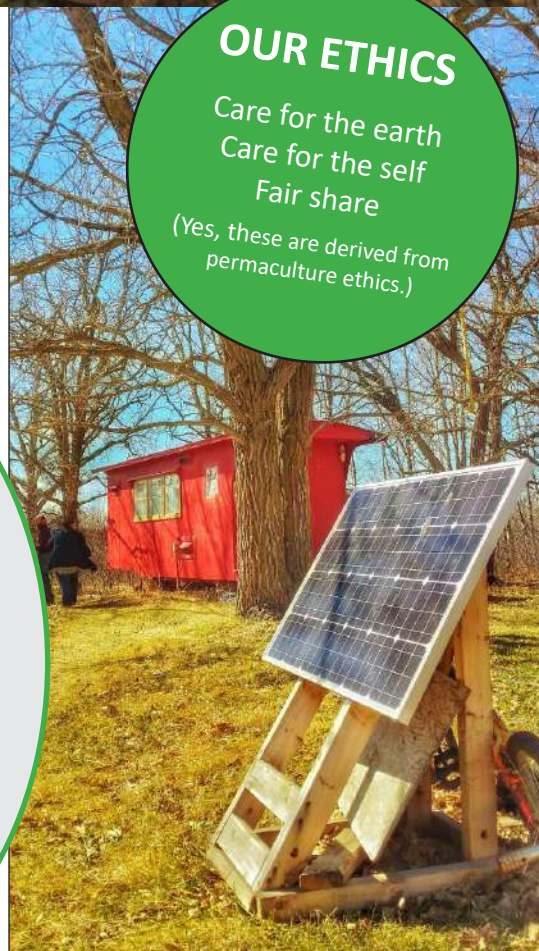
[A] human-scale full-featured settlement in which human activities are harmlessly integrated into the natural world in a way that is supportive of healthy human development, and can be successfully continued into the indefinite future.

Gilman, Robert (Summer, 1991). “The Eco-village Challenge”. In Context.

OUR ETHICS

Care for the earth
Care for the self
Fair share

(Yes, these are derived from permaculture ethics.)



IN THIS ISSUE...

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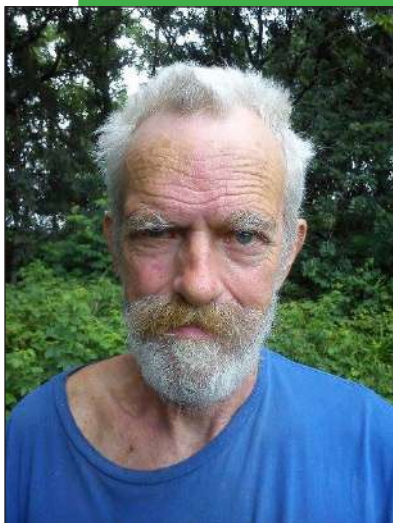
Our Supporters

Upcoming: [Ecovillages.ca](http://ecovillages.ca)

A Wider View

<http://ecovillages.ca/PDFs>

CO-FOUNDER INTERVIEW: Gerhard Dekker of Northern Sun Farm Coop Ecovillage



“After traveling for years I needed a place to settle down in a natural environment. The world at the time was worrying about nuclear disasters. I was 32 years old and fed up with our western culture.”

A founding member, Gerhard Decker has been living for the past 30 years in Northern Sun Farm Coop, a mostly-off-grid community built on ecological values. Formed in the late 70s, this value-based eco-community exists just outside of Steinbach.

What emerged was a community that provides resources for its ‘twelve-ish’ residents in a semi-off-grid manner. It’s ‘twelve-ish’ because not every member lives there all the time. Here, decisions are made by consensus. They lives include respect for the environment, support of personal growth

Our Mission

Connect community members through literature.
Provide resources.
Provide online forums for discussion.

Highlight innovators, groups and people of inspiration who are actively working to migrate food security, climate resilience and the reduction of carbon footprints in the local sphere.

and social justice.

"There is no going completely off-grid in our culture," he notes. "Push it as far as you are comfortable with."

At Northern Sun, each home has its own solar panel system to generate electricity. Gerhard has played a role in bringing this technology into the community.

"In 1983 I built a wind generator, and in 1985 I bought my first solar panel. Having no money to buy ready-made equipment made me learn how to make things from scratch."

"In terms of household electric power, the 'average' house would probably require 5-10 KWhours a day, not counting heating. I can produce about 2 KWhr/day most sunny days. This is typical for our residents."

Northern Sun sits on 240 acres that is uncultivated and forested. They prep ahead of time and chop wood for heat.

"Winter prep is mostly about frost protection. We drain hoses, move items into heated spaces and do chimney cleaning. We get firewood ready to go into wood sheds. Wood harvesting is a mix of personal and communal activities, plus some imported wood.

"We do canning in summer and fall. Food prep is no different in winter, but less fresh produce. Natural refrigeration makes for increased flexibility.

Once ready, winter is a time of relative hibernation.

"We visit each other, read a lot and sleep long hours," he

says of winter activities.

However, there are definite challenges of living off-grid. "Laundry, refrigeration, and starting vehicles in very cold weather," he indicates. "I am not big on laundry, but other members do plenty of it. I generally wash things by hand all year. Last year I used the Steinbach laundromat three times."

"Refrigeration was introduced not many years ago. Two households have solar freezers, with a third coming soon. Some members have access to freezers in the neighborhood which are anywhere from one to twenty-five kilometers away). Our root cellar is always an option too, where the temperature varies from 3°C to 12°C."

Each family is allocated 10,000 square feet, with more given to gardens. Northern Sun residents grow their own food. "Most do take part in gardening. We grow about 50 percent, maybe more. We use no tilling equipment or rototillers and no chemicals of any kind."

But people till their own soil.

"Communal gardens have been a disappointment. Individual gardens work better." And for things they can't grow? "We buy local, order in bulk from Vancouver, or do without."

There are also challenges to living in community. "Common sources of argument include mutual distrust, bad communications and fear." But that said, Gerhard is quick to point out what anyone who wants to move into a community should know. "We need each other, everyone is doing the best they can in their circumstances, and many hands make light work."

To him, good practice in an ecovillage includes "Mutual respect, respect for our environment and good relations with surrounding neighbours." For in this environment, the ways human relationships are strengthened "Too many to count."

It's a place where children and families are welcome. "Families fit reasonably well. This place is very child friendly."

For those interested in this world of self-reliance and are wondering how hard to expect this transition to be, Gerhard says "Not hard. It's all about letting go. Do it if you feel inspired. It's not that hard, and has many rewards."

"I did not expect anything and was open to anything."



Your Community

Meet the circle...

Manitoba is home to a diverse group of companies and individuals who practice ecologically-sensitive visions and values. You never know who might surprise you!

Justin Lecocq

Day Job: *Field manager for Western Canada Wilderness Community*



It was almost ten years ago when I became aware of ecovillages. Soon I was volunteering on organic farms and homesteads, developing the skills for living a subsistence lifestyle. In the past five years' time I have acquired a permaculture design certificate, worked as a timber framer, volunteered on four organic farms, developed a career that I can bring with me to a rural area, volunteer on a co-op board, and fostered loving relationships with others who share my dream of living in an ecovillage. I have been an activist and an artist for as long as I can remember. To me, ecovillage life is living activism, a co-creative project I could dedicate my life to.

In fact, my friends and I have been laying the foundation for a new community, Myriad Village, for almost two years now. Countless small sacrifices have humbled me, drawing out parts of myself that I've always wanted to manifest.

There was an epiphany, probably a few in actuality that started this path for me. Humanity is at the precipice of many great challenges, the greatest of all being anthropogenic climate change. Many think we will drive ourselves to near extinction, continuing to live in complete disregard of the environment, thus exacerbating the issue. They live as if there is no future. However, I choose to live as though there is indeed a future for humanity and the only future possible is one where we live as a member of the earth

community and no longer regard ourselves as rulers of the earth. An intrinsic part of this is the creation of models for responsible resource management and sustainable social organization. Within these one can find a far more joyful and meaningful life.



THE CO-CREATOR
LAUNCH PARTY
SAM'S PLACE
MAY 20 @ 3 PM
159 HENDERSON HWY

ecovillages.ca/wecreate

Meet the Editor



H Jacob Buller

Day Job: *Swamper for All Weather Windows*

I grew up in a cooperative, creative environment. From my family environment to my friends, a great part of my life has been surrounded by people who are cooperative, and have creative interests. However, in the early 2000s I became involved with people who were manipulative. After having experienced first-hand alienation and severe narcissism, I find that part of the healing process is to bring my skills and talents to bear in a way that is socially constructive. A high degree of curiosity and fascination in the many fields represented in this publication fuels my drive.

I also do this as something that my family will gain from. In my immediate family, we want to ensure my two year old and his future family has a future. My partner and I visit ecovillages, exploring different lives in different communities. We engage these alternate, co-creative lifestyles, learning what works for us and what doesn't. Writing about these experiences and their elements is a way for me to apply my gifts and share an experience of the world that tells a unique story, a new story of sharing and cooperation. A fiction writer by birth, I hope in the future I can write novels that utilize what I have learned.

I also do this for the human family, one that is mired in the messy divorce of Father Sky and Mother Earth. For sons and daughters who have lost their way, but know in their hearts that we can do better.

Join the Discussion

New posts on ecovillages.ca include...

For Educators...

We need to start building classrooms to teach children outside

Forest schools in Sweden have been there for a long time. With a proven track record, they help kids with their self-belief, confidence, communication and a whole host of other benefits.

Human Geography and Childhood Development

At the Discovery Children's Center in St. James in mid-March a seminar took place about children and the spaces they play in.

For Farmers...

Community Supported Agriculture

Interdependency is a good thing, especially when it comes to local farms and the clientele that they support!

Visit our parent website <http://ecovillages.ca>

View the full color PDF here!

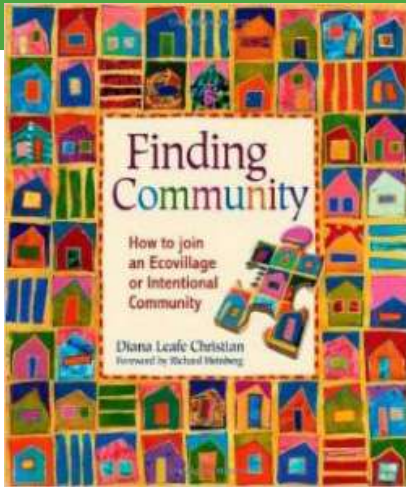
<http://ecovillages.ca/PDFs>



Before enlightenment, carry water, chop wood.

After enlightenment, carry water, chop wood.

-- Zen proverb



Finding Community is a book about visiting ecovillages authored by Diana Leafe Christian, a resident of Earthaven, an ecovillage in North Carolina, USA. Below is a summary of what she discusses in the book about visiting communities.

Call ahead!

Make sure to call before you arrive and get the address from the person you are speaking with. Never just show up. If you plan on sharing your experience or any photos you take in a blog post or somewhere online, mention this ahead of time.

Do your research

Researching ahead of time is a good thing. People feel like you've done your research, and in this context that's a good thing. You're not coming in to it with glassy, overwhelmed eyes and are able to be more present.

Pack as if camping

Of course, this is based on how long you want to stay. If you are going for a short afternoon visit, not much may be needed. For an overnight, bedding is a sure bet. Bring according to the environment. If it's rural, pack as though going camping. A first aid kit and afterbite is a good idea. Remember that you are going to an ecovillage and the point is to be as self reliant as possible. Set a good example.

Bring work gloves

These communities require a lot of effort to create, maintain and sustain. If you're planning on staying for any more than a short visit, come prepared to work. By showing a propensity to work, you are setting a good example if you do decide you want to put yourself on the guest list.

Leave pets at home

Different communities have different rules and policies concerning pets. New animals disrupt any existing balance that animals or kids in the community may have. Play it safe and leave your pet at home.

What hosts really want: Respect

If someone came to your home for a visit, what would you expect? You'd expect them to follow your rules of the house, and play easy with others, right? An ecovillage is a large home to many people. Hosts want visitors who come in and treat others with respect. Respect the land, the community and remember you are just passing through. Be very conscientious about how you treat people's property.

Ask if you can ask questions

It's a great way to break the ice and establish equal footing. You're letting the tour guide (who is probably not trained to be a tour guide), know you're curious and want to know more. You're also not jumping in and being rude about it. Unless it's a dedicated tour guide, they probably have other things on their mind.

How to get what you want

You will probably want to get a feel for the regular activities of the community and find out what they do together. What makes their community unique? You'll also want to know how the community handles conflict when it does arise. Knowing how they handle decision making is also a big question to ask.

Come here, go away

Being a larger version of a person, sometimes communities can get burned out. It's also easy for one person of the community to snap or severely misrepresent the group and what they are all about. Read more about this complication in the book.

Did you hear about the visitor who...?

You don't want to make the community stories in a negative manner. You'll want to ask questions about alcohol before you come for any duration of a stay as well. And most definitely do not bring a moving van.

Originally posted on ecovillages.ca. You can also purchase the book on amazon.ca.

Find it on amazon.ca here!



Word Find

S P O R C L L I M D N I W A N
N O F F T H E G R I D W L O E
O E E R E T N I W S N A I K K
I Z V U B G A X E O S T F I C
T D I R T O P E I A A E E N I
N S T A E A R T H Z U R S D H
E G A L I T A R I A N Z T N C
V Q R W N R L N L L A F Y E O
N R E T E J O S M U R D L S W
I V P P D B S B U S I N E S S
N G O E R E H T E G O T S G I
J O O A A B I M S H A R I N G
C T C L G N I R P S U M M E R
E E L B A N I A T S U S K P Y
D O O W E R I F N O B U N U Y

air
axe
bonfire
business
chicken
coop
cooperation
cooperative
cows
crops
decarbonization
dirt

drums
earth
egalitarian
fall
farm
fire
firewood
garden
goat
inventions
kindness
lifestyle

offgrid
rural
sauna
sharing
solar panel
spring
summer
sustainable
together
trees
water
windmill

Ad space

A Closer Look

Northern Sun Farm

Official website

<http://northernsunfarm.weebly.com/>

Friends of Northern Sun Farm Facebook Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/347377108718193/>

Northern Sun documentary

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5sjhuHaLs4>

Ploughshares

Official Facebook Group

<https://www.facebook.com/Ploughshares-Community-Farm-545815258804057/>

Entry on Small Farms

<https://smallfarmsmanitoba.com/farms/24/ploughshares-community-farm>

Twin Oaks

Official website

<http://www.twinoaks.org/>

Wikipedia Entry

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twin_Oaks_Community,_Virginia

On YouTube

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Twin+Oaks

Upcoming: ecovillages.ca

As a side project, ecovillages.ca remains forthcoming. While there is a public-facing site at the moment with limited functionality and hosting, it is not ready to be announced. There is further styling and functionality to be coded. If you are interested in helping out, please visit the opportunities page on ecovillages.ca.

<http://www.ecovillages.ca/about/opportunities/>

Some articles published in The Co-Creator may have been posted to ecovillages.ca originally. The relationship between The Co-Creator and ecovillages.ca is mutual. The theme of the final issue of The Co-Creator is planned to include highlights on the December 2015 Paris convention as well as ecovillages.ca.

Depending on the reception of The Co-Creator and ecovillages.ca, it may become the official newsletter of ecovillages.ca.

If there is anything ecovillages are, it is community. The website, when ready, will aim to bring greater interaction among this emerging community in Manitoba.

Our Supporters

Communities

Ploughshares Community Farm

Myriad Village

Northern Sun Farm

Individuals

Jay Horton

Businesses

Sam's Place

Congratulations
on the launch of The Co-Creator!



Buller Films LLC
www.themennonitesfilm.com

A Wider View

Like humans, each ecovillage is unique with its own soul, its own individuality. Like the soul, a few elements are consistent between them, but they vary wildly with experience, maturity and integration. Take for example Twin Oaks in Virginia, USA. It has a 48-year history, over 75 people, several very successful businesses, a health benefit plan, an outreach program and governance by something called participative democracy. Ploughshares, a Manitoba community has four families sharing chores on farmland. Each family has one adult working in town, kids are homeschooled when young and attend high school in town, and it is exactly the scale the people involved want. Northern Sun Farm has a group of about 12 people living off-the-grid in a cozy, DIY setting.



Housing in ecovillages is often represented in different sizes, shapes and accommodations as well. Sometimes land is subdivided so individuals can lease parcels from the community and build on their own. Sometimes the community builds a dorm for co-housing, other times the community might build individual housing to be rented out. Strawbales and rammed tires are materials that make an appearance in Earthships and other passive buildings. Other times people simply set up yurts, tents or park a camper trailer on the property avoiding zoning issues with permanent structures. Many communities give time and attention to creating space specifically for shared meals and other community events, and others do not.

Overwhelm can be easy during a visit to a community. Research ahead of time will help provide an idea for how and why things are structured the way they are and make the visit easier and prepare yourself for what you will see. When present at an ecovillage, one will likely want to be relating, asking questions and adventuring, not rooted with the realization of fundamental differences that work when people want to cooperate.



The spirit of what one looks for in a community will be different from person to person as well. A young single person will have different wants and needs than an older single person, or even family. Another factor that comes into play is employment. Some ecovillages have businesses that one can work for. At others one will need to find work in a nearby town or be able to work online.

Communities can be a kaleidoscope of unique experience, color, texture and feel. Your best bet is to be educated. The more you know the better off you'll be.

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