



# THE COMPASS

**Spring 2010**

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## Blow Yer Stink Off

-By Amy Schwartz

If I had a dollar for every time a parent, teacher or babysitter grumbled to my siblings and I to 'get outside and blow yer stink off' I'd be a wealthy stink-offer by now. I never did understand the literal meaning of that phrase, but I did understand that it gave me license to make puddle soup, work on my brother's tree fort, stick my nose in spruce gum, hop on the rocks by the river, pick flowers, roll down the hill, mess around on my bike or do any number of deliciously dirt-filled activities.

Growing up in Nova Scotia, or anywhere else in the Maritimes, being told to blow yer stink off meant going outside and playing until we became too tired to make any mischief indoors. It was something every kid was good at; playing and exploring - and no one needed any specialized training or organized structure to do it. Counting bugs, spying on beavers, finding birds' nests, berry picking, building forts out of debris was easy and it taught us a ton about ourselves and the world around us.

[continued below](#) . . .

## Welcome Amy!

Amy Schwartz is HPP's new Outdoor Recreation Consultant. Born in PEI, raised on the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia and now a fervent Halifax bicycler, she was the Executive Director of the Nova Scotia Sea School and volunteer Vice President of the Surfing Association of Nova Scotia before starting with HPP in February. She's also worked as a tree-planter in Northern Ontario, a youth adventure guide in Quebec, an instructor for Outward Bound Costa Rica, a kayaking guide with Coastal Adventures in NS and an assistant with AWID's young woman and leadership program in Cape Town. "I love how many opportunities there are for getting outside in every corner of the province. I think Nova Scotia is Canada's richest treasure of outdoor adventures and we have this awesome outdoorsy culture that includes adventurers of all stripes. You can hike, bike, canoe, kayak, surf, climb, hunt, fish, dig clams, do handstands on a beach, swing on trees, ski, skate, snowboard, stick your face in the snow and play in the most beautiful environments."

Amy's enthusiasm and experience in community development will be an asset as she works on active transportation, NSOLD, Take the Roof Off Winter and supports other outdoor recreation projects with HPP. Join me in welcoming Amy to the Compass!

## Job Opportunity for Students

**Community Environmental Educator**

**awesome outdoor  
photo!**

**frasersx@gov.ns.ca**

The Ecology Action Centre is looking for a returning student to fill this exciting full-time summer position.

**Location:** Halifax, Nova Scotia

**Duration:** 3 June to 26 August, 2010

**Wage:** \$13.25 per hour for 35 hours per week

**Application:** Send a cover letter, resume and two references to Maggy Burns, Internal Director, centre@ecologyaction.ca, with subject line - Community Education Coordinator by May 19, 2010 at 4pm.

Work with local community groups and organizations to develop and deliver youth environmental education programs that focus on issues connected to Halifax's North End neighbourhood and daily life (e.g. local food pancake breakfast, discovering nature in Needham Park, urban gardening). As part of these programs participants will create two or more environmental murals. The Community Environmental Educator will build a stronger sense of community and solidarity between EAC and local groups, organizations and families in our North End neighbourhood, provide rich learning experiences for local youth, and leave a beautiful legacy in the form of community-led, environmental murals.

## Lansdowne Outdoor Recreation Development Association

Seniors and persons with disabilities will soon be able to better enjoy outdoor recreation activities when a park in the Westville, Pictou County area reopens with help from the province.

The Lansdowne Outdoor Recreation Development Association operates a 121-hectare park, known as LORDA, that offers free fishing and camping for seniors, persons with disabilities and their families.

The Departments of Economic and Rural Development and Health Promotion and Protection will provide a combined \$33,000.

This funding will allow for capital upgrades to the park and implementation of recommendations from an operational analysis and strategic plan, which both departments funded in 2008.

"The park provides important physical activity and recreation opportunities for the people of Pictou County and Nova Scotia," said Minister of Health Promotion and Protection, Maureen MacDonald. "Getting Nova Scotians more active is a top priority of our department."

"This is a valuable recreational park for the community and the province," said Minister of Economic and Rural Development, Percy Paris. "Staff from both departments will lend their expertise to ensure its sustainability in an effort to make life better for families in this region."

The association's board of directors will work with the province to implement recommendations from its analysis. The association also has a volunteer staff member in place to develop a fundraising strategy.

"We are pleased with this support from the province," said David Leese, LORDA's curator. "It shows the importance of the park and what it has to offer its community and seniors."

## Blow yer stink off (continued from [featured article](#))

Little did they know that in their efforts to get us out of their hair, our parents and grandparents were doing our health and development a huge favour. Kids who play outside are proven to be happier, healthier and more resilient. A growing body of studies shows that the relaxation, stimulation, fun and aesthetics that children are exposed to in natural areas improves their levels of physical activity but also positively impacts their self-esteem, stress-levels, ability to focus and academic performance. Children who have regular contact with natural environments are more likely to maintain healthy physical and mental habits as adults. Play in natural spaces is also proven to wean environmental stewards; it makes children curious about their surroundings, helps them observe their impact on the environment, feel their place within it and motivates them to ensure their children have a healthy world to inherit.

But as outdoor recreationists I'm sure you are thinking "DUH. We've known the importance of connection to nature on child development since we were kids!" So what is the issue? Every year fewer children have the opportunity to connect with nature. Outdoor education and green spaces are lacking, grandparents and parents won't let their children go outside to play because they believe their neighbourhoods as unsafe. More people are opting for TVs, wiis and structured activities because the threat of unfamiliar people, unknown accidents and wild animals seem too great for children to play outside. Although crime rates are decreasing and attacks by wild animals are thousands of times less than car accidents, something in our society has shifted. We fear the perceived unknowns of nature as never before and this is having a detrimental effect on our health and the health of our children. As Richard Louv explains in his book *Last Child in the Woods*, this lack of contact with nature has resulted in a generation

of children with nature deficit disorder.

Whether it is useful to frame this as a social sickness or not is beside the point. But knowing what we do about the health, emotional and cognitive benefits for children who connect with nature, it is essential that we preserve and promote opportunities for them to play and learn outside. We should remember the positive impact playing outside had on us as kids and tell those stories, connect our parents and grandparents with the joy and learning they had blowing their stink off as children (likely uphill both ways in the snow) and encourage them to share those experiences, persuade our media to highlight stories that remind us that society is safer now than ever, remind our educators about how much more we can learn when we have class outside or engage in experiential outdoor learning and whenever we should take ourselves, our friends and family outside .

In my opinion, Nova Scotian children should be in a state of nature surplus rather than nature deficit. With more than 4000 kilometres of coastline, hundreds of trails, gazillions of trees, almost 500 lakes - our kids should be walking stink-off bombs! Even the most urban area of this province is a short bus ride from a beautiful natural area. This is the land of nature-plenty. Let's get ourselves and our kids outside and get a whole lot of stink off.

Great resources I used for this article that demonstrate the connection of nature deficit to mental and physical health:

[www.childrenandnature.org](http://www.childrenandnature.org)

[www.essex.ac.uk](http://www.essex.ac.uk)

[www.nature.com](http://www.nature.com)

[www.essex.ac.uk/ces/occasionalpapers](http://www.essex.ac.uk/ces/occasionalpapers)

Become a member of Canada's Child and Nature Alliance [www.childnature.ca](http://www.childnature.ca)

## Upcoming Programs & Events

**SPOKE.NS Beginner Rides** starting Tuesday, May 4th and every Tuesday from 6:00 to 7:30 pm Trenton Park & various locations throughout Pictou County, **Contact:** (902) 928-0331 [pictoucountycycle.com](http://pictoucountycycle.com)

**Ride Girls** All Women weekly mountain bike rides starting Thursday May 6 Every Thursday at 6:15 pm locations throughout HRM. **Contact:** [ridegirls.ca](http://ridegirls.ca)

**Climb Nova Scotia Monday Night Bouldering** begins May 17 at 6:00 pm. Every Monday locations vary. **Contact:** [climbnovascotia.blogspot.com](http://climbnovascotia.blogspot.com)

**Reel Paddling Film Festival** May 28 7 - 10 pm Dal McCain Bld, Ondaatje Auditorium Admission General - \$10 (\$13 at the door) Students/Seniors - \$7 (\$10 at the door) [www.reelpaddlingfilmfestival.com](http://www.reelpaddlingfilmfestival.com)

**HRM Bike Week** May 28 - Jun 6 Variety of events throughout HRM. Full schedule of events at: [www.halifax.ca/bikeweek](http://www.halifax.ca/bikeweek)

**NSOLD Mentoring in the Outdoors** TBA June 2010 Cape Breton Contact: Isabelle at [isabelle@heartwood.ns.ca](mailto:isabelle@heartwood.ns.ca)

**Sea Kayak Instructor School** June 4 - 6. Paddle Canada Introduction to Kayaking Skills Richmond Academy, Cape Breton **Contact:** Chris at (902) 247-5095 or email [christopher@committed2thecore.com](mailto:christopher@committed2thecore.com)

**Canoe Instructor School** June 4 - 6 & June 11 - 13 Richmond, Cape Breton **Contact:** Peter at (902) 872-2254 or email [peter.dowd@gmail.com](mailto:peter.dowd@gmail.com) [www.ckns.ca](http://www.ckns.ca)

**MEC Bikefest** June 6 at the Central Commons, Halifax **Contact:** [halifaxbikefest@mec.ca](mailto:halifaxbikefest@mec.ca) or call (902) 421-2667.

**21st Annual Atlantic Canada Sea Kayaker's Meeting** June 12-13 Tangier **Contact:** Scott Cunningham, (877) 404-2774 [info@coastaladventures.com](mailto:info@coastaladventures.com) or [www.coastaladventures.com](http://www.coastaladventures.com)

**MEC Paddlefest** July 4 Lake Banook, Dartmouth **Contact:** Patrick Humer at [halifaxpaddlefest@mec.ca](mailto:halifaxpaddlefest@mec.ca) or (902)421.2667 [www.mec.ca](http://www.mec.ca)

**Hike NS** in cooperation with Goose Lane Editions will be coordinating the **launch** of **Michael Haynes newest book** entitled **Trails of Halifax Regional Municipality**, second edition. The book will be available at the book launch and available in book stores after July 7. More info to follow on HIKE Nova Scotia website [www.hikenovascotia.ca](http://www.hikenovascotia.ca) and [www.gooselane.com](http://www.gooselane.com) see events section.

**Canada's Parks Day** Saturday July 17 [www.parksday.ca](http://www.parksday.ca) or [www.novascotiaparks.ca](http://www.novascotiaparks.ca)

**Wilderness Remote First Aid / Canoe ABC Combo** August 24 - 29 Keji area **Contact:** Blair Doyle [adventure@hfx.eastlink.ca](mailto:adventure@hfx.eastlink.ca) 222-0868 (cel) 902-434-9122 (h) [www.wrfa.ca](http://www.wrfa.ca)

**Becoming an Outdoors Woman** Fall 2010 Workshop September 10 - 12, 2010 Mount Traber Camp, Cooks Brook, Halifax County **Contact:** Pam Grace (902) 424 - 5832 or email [BOWNS@gov.ns.ca](mailto:BOWNS@gov.ns.ca)

**NSOLD Camping Skills** September 24 - 26 Fun Forest Lodge, Beaver Bank (near Sackville) **Contact:** George Taylor [taylor@region.halifax.ns.ca](mailto:taylor@region.halifax.ns.ca) or (902) 490-4584

**NSOLD Environmental Interpretation** TBA Fall 2010 Contact: Janet Barlow [wonder@senseofwonderee.ca](mailto:wonder@senseofwonderee.ca) or (902) 494-7644

**NSOLD Wilderness Camping Skills** September 25 - 26 Antigonish/ Highland Region **Contact:** [www.nsold.ca](http://www.nsold.ca)

**Nova Scotia Trails Federation Trails for Tomorrow Today Conference** Oct. 1 - 3, Annapolis Basin Conference Centre, Cornwallis Park **Contact:** [www.novascotiatrials.com](http://www.novascotiatrials.com)

**NSOLD Wilderness Navigation** October 23rd Antigonish/ Highland Region **Contact:** [www.nsold.ca](http://www.nsold.ca)

### Contact Info

Sandra Fraser  
NS Department of Health Promotion and Protection  
[frasersx@gov.ns.ca](mailto:frasersx@gov.ns.ca)



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