

Review of Federal Environmental Assessment Processes Canada 2016

Letter from: Lorne Peterson

“Learning to live in community with the land.”

November 18, 2016

To: Chair of EAPR Panel, Johanne Gélina

cc: Minister of Environment and Climate Change  
fellow residents living in the land

Dear EAR Panel Chair Gélina:

Re: Environmental Assessment Processes Review

I am writing as a resident to propose some ideas for making better environmental assessments.

We need to do more than assess the “impacts” of human projects in the places and regions where we live in Canada

For many decades, ecological thinkers and land planners have been working to unify ecology ~ community ~ culture ~ society ~ economy. For example, Ian McHarg author of “Design with Nature” (1969) has shown that people can learn to live and plan in ways that contribute to the ecology of the land.

Aldo Leopold wrote in his 1948 book “A Sand County Almanac”, human beings must realize that the land is not “a commodity belonging to us.” His vision and work showed that a shift in perspective is involved: “When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.”

Writers of nature and place, poets, painters, dancers, photographers, singers and others in the arts have expressed similar concepts, philosophies and ethics in their works and life. Biologist and writer Rachel Carson, author of “Under the Sea Wind” (1941), brought together science and story writing in her work.

We need assessments that involve collaborative learning with residents of the land, from local to regional to around our Earth home perspectives. By residents I mean everyone ~ rock and land forms, waters, air, plants, animals, and people.

The overall aim would be to learn to live in community with the land and our diverse fellow inhabitants.

With this aim in mind, there could be four inter-related questions for assessing human projects in the land.

- 0 What are the best ways of learning together the ecology of life in land communities?
- 0 In what ways will a proposed human project contribute to the well-being and spirit of inhabitants in land communities?
- 0 In what ways will the proposed project lessen or harm the well-being and spirit of the land and its inhabitants?
- 0 Is this a project that will contribute to respectful and harmonious relations in the land communities where we live together?

Each assessment could be guided by this learning of where we live and who we are.

Assessment reviews would be done in rounded gatherings of people in the natural and social sciences, in the arts, and residents of the land. This goes further than “public participation”. We would be learning, conversing and acting together.

The essence of this approach to assessments could be expressed as:

Learning to see, listen, sense and appreciate the ecology of life, and learning to live as members of land communities in and around our Earth home.

These are my thoughts and suggestions for making better environmental assessments for the land and its inhabitants. I am looking forward to receiving your responses.

I am also including below one example of what could be done in getting to know fellow inhabitants of the land.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Lorne Peterson

A resident of Kichisipi ~Ottawa

Lower Kichisipi ~ Outaouais ~ Ottawa River valley

Kichisipi (Great River) region

P.S. Please find on next page some notes and a photograph: *Yellow Trout Lily* in the Laurentian Shield Rock Hills near Ottawa.



*Yellow Trout Lily*  
(*Erythronium americanum*)

Laurentian Shield Rock Hills  
Kichisipi ~ Outaouais ~ Ottawa  
May 2016

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Botanists and ecologists have learned that a mature Trout Lily corm may be 250-years-old. Some inter-connected Trout Lily communities can be older than 1000 years. Their long life gives us insights into the ecology of evergreen-deciduous forest communities. We could say that Trout Lily is an elder of the forest community from whom we can learn much more, especially ways of living in respectful inter-relations with each other and the land.