

Brief Report on Maude Barlow's Presentation
Clean Water a Public Right
April 14, 2018

We had an amazing morning listening to Maude speak from her deep experiential knowledge and broad research of issues surrounding water on a global, national, provincial and local level. Despite the ice storm which worsened as the morning went on, ninety five people showed up of the two hundred and ten who were registered. It was unfortunate that so many could not share in the event due to the extreme weather. Hopefully this summary will give some sense of what happened and offer possibilities for further exploration and action.

A wide range of individuals and groups were represented including a little baby (not counted among the 95) but referenced beautifully by a gentleman during our discussion.

Joanne Rovet a member of MC²'s environment committee did a lovely introduction of Maude which follows:

"On behalf of the Environment Committee of the Mono-Mulmur Citizen's Coalition, it is my great honour to welcome Maude Barlow to Dufferin County and the town of Orangeville, which has so graciously made this event possible.

Maude Barlow is a Canadian environmental icon and world famous water activist, who is deeply committed to preserving and protecting our water supply. Her goal ultimately is to ensure that all Canadians, particularly First Nations' people, have clean and safe water to drink. She has campaigned fearlessly and tirelessly around the globe to have water recognized as a human right and not a tradable commodity for commercial profit, which is the route of many deals including NAFTA.

Maude Barlow's work is recognized nationally and internationally. To name a few of her distinctions, she is the past and now honorary Chair of the Council of Canadians, Chair Person of the Washington-based Food and Water Watch, Senior Advisor on water to the President of the UN General Assembly, co-Founder of the Blue Planet Project, and a councillor at the World Future Council in Hamburg. She is also the recipient of multiple awards including the Right Livelihood Award (an alternative to the Nobels), the Lannen Foundation Cultural Freedom Fellowship Award, the Citation of Lifetime Achievement at the 2008 Canadian Environment Awards, and just two nights ago, received the inaugural Water Warriors award at the Water Docs festival in Toronto. The list goes on. She has also received more than a dozen honorary doctorates. She is the author 6 books, including *Boiling Point* on sale here today, and co-author of at least 12 more as well as dozens of reports. She is also featured in numerous documentaries and films. There are many ways to describe Maude Barlow but above all, she is just lovely and inspirational in enticing us to join her campaign.

Here at the headwaters of the Great Lakes, we are for many reasons deeply concerned about protecting our water supply, which too has of late become at risk. Please join me in warmly welcoming Maude Barlow."

Maude then spoke to us for about 50 minutes. She emphasized that water is a human right telling us about the example in Detroit where tens of thousands of people who could not pay had their water turned off. With deep inequality comes increased conflict. Globally entrenched inequality has not kept up with the water crisis. By 2030 the supply of fresh water will only be available to 30% of people in the world. She described some of the myths we can hold about water especially in Canada. Even though we have a lot of water only 6.5% is available fresh water. The Great Lakes are warming and being threatened increasingly with water-taking from industry

and drought stricken parts of the U.S. All of our glaciers are melting. Arctic lakes, which are shallow to begin with, are disappearing. Canada leads the planet in degradation of forests and wetlands. We continue to dump herbicides and pesticides into the soil and water. Generally, there is poor protection of water and low standards in Canada.

The Council of Canadians acts as a non partisan (in a political sense) organization that Maude says, "...allows us to be mad at everyone." You can find up to date information on their website www.canadians.org. It is an excellent source of information on action being taken in communities across Canada and research on a broad range of topics relating to our environment. One of these pieces is on NAFTA and well worth the read as a statement on both the first NAFTA agreement from 1989 and the current negotiations. Maude said that back by 1989 we were developing more of a manufacturing/industrial base such that it represented about 26% of GDP. Today it is about 11% as we become more resource dependent for our economy. As an example the current tar sands in Alberta dump 11 million liters of toxins every day in retaining ponds. The Kinder Morgan expansion as proposed will only increase the dumping of toxins. In addition the heavy oil needs to be thinned with chemicals like benzene. Again check their website for up to date information. There is also a huge fracking frenzy in Alberta and British Columbia. Maude briefly referenced one of the first water wars which was in Bolivia in the 1990's. With the aid of the World Bank water became privatized and the cost of water tripled. There was an uprising. Maude remembers one activist when questioned about the danger of the resistance say, "I'd rather die of a bullet than thirst."

Here in Ontario the Clean Water Act (due to the Walkerton tragedy) is good though does not catch many contaminants. Eighty seven per cent of chemicals currently in use have not been tested nor approved. In addition urban sprawl, inadequate agricultural processes, mining, The Ring of Fire and watertaking (Nestle's takes 6 million liters per day) are continuing to threaten our water.

Meanwhile Maude does believe we need to focus on what we can do and celebrate the battles that have been won. The energy east pipeline was stopped in large part by communities resisting the project. Another win to rejoice was Site 41 where they wanted to have a large dump site on an Alliston aquifer. The local megaquarry which would have not only destroyed farmland but also threatened water was stopped by citizens. Continuing presentations as we had today and other forms of education are important. We need to bring kids into nature, especially urbanized kids. We need to be aware of attempts to 'marketize' pollution (similar to a carbon tax) that doesn't solve the challenges. Joining local groups like MC², and larger national groups like the Council of Canadians are important. Maude suggested we could form a local chapter of the Council of Canadians. Our community could become a Blue Community (see: www.canadians.org/bluecommunities). There is also the Blue Dot Movement (www.blue.dot.ca) of which two of our towns already subscribe and has a different emphasis.

We had a break for time to mingle, have some refreshments and purchase Maude's book, *Boiling Point*. Representing our wonderful independent bookstore, Booklore, Brenda and Jenny braved the weather and were able to sell the books while Maude graciously signed copies for people. *Boiling Point* is an accessible read full of examples and comprehensive research relating to water. Copies are available at Booklore.

We then had a question and discussion period. One idea that stayed with me was to not despair that we tend to attract a more dominantly older crowd to these kinds of events. Rather we need to continue and in addition go to where young people are in places like schools.

Elaine Capes, the president of MC² gave us inspiring closing thoughts and also thanked Maude and the many who helped to make this event a success:

“To our audience thank you for your courage braving the weather and coming out today and for your concern about our water. We trust you will spread the word and do what you can. Consider joining the Council of Canadians; we need to help Maude create a quiet mind.

Thank you to the church for making their beautiful place available; true to their commitment to be open to the community and foster community, accepting of all who want to join in; and a special thanks to Reverend Sandra, for her leadership in this regard.

A big thank you to the environment committee for organizing the event and to Rita for originally suggesting to invite Maude and see if she would be able and willing to come. Thanks to the board for supporting the event and making it financially possible.

Finally of course, thank you Maude for making the time to come to Dufferin County to be with us. Through her long-standing efforts on so many fronts she has given all of us a national and international voice with great courage and perseverance and HOPE – this is what the new warrior looks like.

In honour of Maude coming today we will be planting a tree with a plaque in the Mono pollinator garden, which is a growing symbol that one day we will live in a pesticide free Dufferin, not only free of neonicotinoids, glyphosate but many other toxic chemicals as well in our water and food.

I’d like to leave you with this final closing message.....

“Given no change in our affliction of the planet, optimistic scientist give us another hundred years (pessimist give us fifty) before the earth gets rid of us to save itself. The same survival instinct that expresses itself in us is indigenous to Nature on a global scale. Nature has always dispensed with any species that could not adapt to its changes, but we seem to expect the planet to adapt to ours. It will not; we are dispensable. “ (Harville Hendrix PhD, Keeping the Love you Find page 301)

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