

Sustainability in Canada

There is much that Canada can learn from Tanzania about the importance of sustainability

By Chris Hunt

hunt0256@algonquincollege.com

The rich, varied landscape of the Serengeti is a place where one can see a world largely untainted by man. It's also a place where sustainable development practices have been implemented by necessity.

The Tanzanian economy is largely dependent on tourism. Tens of thousands of people visit the country each year to climb Mount Kilimanjaro or to safari in the Serengeti. Nurturing the environment is vital to keeping these areas pristine, which allows for sustainable tourism.

What is sustainable development and what can Canada learn about it from Tanzania?

According to the World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission) sustainable development is defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

The foundation of sustainable development rests upon three main pillars: social, economic and environmental.

Each of the above pillars is multifaceted, and each pillar is dependent on the others. If one crumbles, so too do the others.

Humans expand. It's the nature of the species and provides an example of the social pillar.

"With more people living closer to protected areas more conflict between wildlife and people are unavoidable. There is no doubt the ultimate survival of all conservation areas will depend on the local communities' awareness of the importance of the natural resources contained in the protected areas," wrote Joe ole Kuwai, the projects director at the Frankfurt Zoological Society, on the official Serengeti website.

Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA) as part of the National Parks Policy enacted in 1994 has developed interpretive and educational programs to educate the public about the national parks. This is done in a variety of ways, from newsletters to supporting conservation clubs in 74 primary schools near the parks.

Canada has done a reasonable job of educating the public about its National Parks, but what about other protected areas? How many Canadians know what NWAs, MBSs and MWAs stand for?

Respectively they stand for National Wildlife Areas, Migratory Bird Sanctuaries and Marine Wildlife Areas. According to the Canadian Wildlife Service, Canada has 51 NWAs, 92 MBSS and only one MBA.

"The lack of public knowledge about them basically means they've gotten no attention," said Ted Cheskey of Nature Canada.

Or how many people know that Canada, like Tanzania, is home to a great migration. Every year between three and four billion birds migrate from the Boreal Forest to the south, some reaching as far as the Caribbean islands.

"Thirty-five million birds hit Nicaragua. That's one for every Canadian," said Cheskey, adding that number was a ballpark estimate.

The environment is the second pil-



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The Serengeti is home to many varied species of plant and animal life, like the tall-standing giraffe, (above) and the legendary lion (below). Because tourism is vital to the economy, ensuring the environment is protected is integral. This is achieved in part from controlled bushfires to constant monitoring of both the land and animals.

lar. Preserving the environment is of vital importance to the survival of the Serengeti. The keepers of the Serengeti know their environment and understand the inherent dangers that threaten their wildlife. They minimize wild fires by controlled burning early in the year. The land is constantly monitored and species once on the very edge of extinction, like rhinos, are carefully protected.

According to Environment Canada, 1.19 per cent of Canada's landmass is listed as protected.

In 2002 Canada implemented the Species at Risk Act (SARA). This act is designed to protect Canadian animals and their habitat from becoming extinct or expatriated, (extinct in Canada but still exists in another place.)

"Part of the action plan is supposed to identify critical habitats for endangered species," said Cheskey. It's a legal requirement of the act, but the government is slow to take action.

"In the meantime, the threats to these species continue to grow."

Take for example the woodland caribou in the Boreal forest. They have been listed as "threatened" since at least 2007. In that year a scientific review to identify habitat critical to their existence began.

The study didn't gather enough information on what parts of the habitat should be protected. Further study was recommended and is expected to be completed in 2010. A recovery plan is expected to be available the following year, four years after the species had been listed as "threatened."

In an email responding to a question about the impact of SARA, Environment Canada had this to say: "Considerable effort continues to be made on the part of the federal, provincial and territorial governments to prepare recovery strategies, management plans and/or action plans for listed species. At present, recovery strategies for 110 species are now posted as final or proposed on the SARA public registry and work on strategies for 183 additional species is underway."

The Boreal Forest stretches for 1.3 billion acres across Canada and is an important ecosystem. Thirty per cent of it has been allocated for industrial



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use, while around 10 per cent is allocated for conservation. According to the Nature Canada website, 10 per cent is less than what is needed to sustain the Boreal Forest over time. It's under threat from mining, logging and oil and gas operations.

Canada has a quarter of the world's wetlands, but because of agriculture and urban development, much of it has been lost.

A few years ago Nature Canada conducted an analysis to determine how much money the government spends per hectare on protected sites. It was discovered that at the time of the study the government was spending around \$12 per hectare in National Parks. For NWAs and MBSs combined the government was spending 16 cents per hectare.

Environment Canada was asked about how much funding goes into protected areas. "Environment Canada has been investing approximately \$4 million annually in its protected areas over the last few years. In 2009/10, this

amount will increase to approximately \$6 million," was the emailed answer.

Economy is the third pillar. Tanzania has managed to marry economic sustainability with environmental sustainability. Their economy is largely dependent on ecotourism. As long as the environment is sustained then the economy thrives.

This is perhaps the best lesson that Canada can learn from Tanzania, that by conserving the environment it's possible to find ways to encourage a sustainable economy.

Protecting the environment is a great way to create jobs. The government has recently spent \$43 million dollars in hiring 100 law enforcement officers to monitor protected areas.

Canada needs to pay attention to the fact that the Serengeti is as popular as it is, not only because of what it can teach us, but because there is a macabre irony in that people are willing to pay to see a landscape that appears to never have been touched by the hands of man.