

## 2018 - the Year of Shift

By Constance Scrafield

Since 2007, 11 countries across Africa have engaged together to build a wall of trees along the southern edge of the Sahara Desert. Using drought-resistant Acacia trees, the countries are working to plant a 15 kilometre-wide band across the continent, some 8,000 kilometres long.

This is following China's similar Great Green Wall efforts to stop the Gobi Desert since 1978, a massive project with heavy demerits to its success, as a result of intentions without realistic due diligence.

However, the African Great Green Wall seems to be working well. Successful agriculture and improved economy are growing along the wall, perhaps showing that the difference in the ways Africans and the Chinese proceed is a possible secret to success. Is optimism a disability? If so, sign me up but forget the treatment and never mind trying for a cure. I am irrepressibly optimistic, while understanding all too well the reasons to justify depressive, dysfunctionally ruinous pessimism.

Across the board, from the grassroots level all the way to the top, there are people, groups, organizations that are finally making noises about the changes that have to happen, loud enough to be heard throughout most of the Jungle.

Our world, our civilizations, our species are much more at risk than any politician or industrialist is prepared to admit. Where to begin?

The environment, with all it represents, namely, everything on which we depend to stay alive ? must rank first among of our concerns. All our misdemeanours influence the health of the environment, hence, our own health and very existence.

This is denied and/or diminished by far too many powerful people. Not for want of warnings on the part of 95% of reputable scientists globally, emphasizing, in no uncertain terms, the terrifying consequences of delay in the way we run the world, in every aspect.

Like being stuck in the desert sand, the wheels of imperative change are moving far too slowly or not at all to make the kind of difference that needs to be made. Setting goals for small percentages in reduction of emissions for decades away is a huge part of the problem, is lip service only the seriousness of our state of affairs, for there is no such person as a high ranking politician, looking to be voted back in, who has the nerve to confront industry and money in favour of the planet.

Still building pipelines and supporting oil companies; still making it hard to own and drive an electric car; still supporting coal, restraining scientific writings, closing environmental research stations.

Still waging war.

The human cost of violence is incalculable while the benefits to those promoting the use of arms, although a mountain range of money, could be counted. The cost to humanity in the effects of global warming is only just beginning and the future holds a much larger fee.

Having said all of which...

New Zealand, Bolivia, Ecuador, India and other countries have agreed internally, with new laws and changes to their constitutions, that Nature should have legal rights and advocates to enforce them. Rivers have the right to flow clear of pollution from their headwaters; forests, land, animals have rights as persons to exist free of harm.

People are interested in numerous projects and ways in which to do no more harm as individuals. Electric cars are part of this and Orangeville's decision not to provide access to charging comes at the wrong time in the public's pursuit of driving cleaner.

A website, Green Matters, contains a very long list of individual and collective efforts at changing how certain things are done. Solar panels play a large part in numerous mentions, as well they should.

Success and determination to clean up our act are evident all around us. One hopes that Donald Trump's undoing of progress under earlier leadership will become evidently uneconomical; that his policies, so appalling to the rest of the world and a large sector of his fellow Americans, are reversed before doing all the damage they could.

Trump and his ilk are dinosaurs that need to pass into history sooner than later.

Fact is, everyone knows. We all know how desperate is our planet's condition and the dire circumstances in which a huge portion of humanity is living. We are actually aware that the wars, the wreckage, the degradation of racism, cruelty ? the insanity of how we live has to stop.

What can we do? We can tell our politicians to stop supporting oil and back the alternatives; we can vote with our wallets, insisting on sustainable agriculture and efficient, at least, and totally green, at best, automobiles; we can demand more ecologically designed new houses as law.

We can be kind to each other. Not as a gooey, self satisfying approach but as logical, clean, mental healthy attitude one person to

everyone else.

We can unplug ourselves and read a book, go for a walk; talk to each other over a meal.