

ARTISTS JOIN THE FIGHT TO SAVE OUR LAKES

This year Great Lakes United has forged some visionary links with artists, and the result has been creative philanthropy for our Lakes.

Toronto artist Barbara Klunder chose Great Lakes United to be one of five groups to benefit from the sale of thirteen of her creations. Her show "Tapestries for the Environment" at Toronto's Museum for Textiles, featured stunning rugs with environmental themes such as "Watch the Water" and "What Are the Fish Eating?" A beautiful full-colour catalogue of the show is available for a donation to Great Lakes United.

The next year GLU will continue to work with Barbara Klunder on her next project to benefit the Lakes, with proceeds from a line of children's "Us Kids Care" message T-shirts and other environmentally friendly products.

GLU will also be working with performing artists in the next year. The Syracuse Group "In Concert with Nature" is planning a series of benefit concerts for GLU in the summer of 1990. GLU will also be working with John Burt's River Barge Productions, a theatre company, on a Great Lakes production designed to tour around the basin. River Barge is renowned for its "Musical Catastrophe" and "The Slick of '76," about the 1976 oil spill on the St. Lawrence River.

GLU applauds the initiatives of these artists working for change, who have recognized that all sectors of society have a role to play in our struggle to save our Lakes.

Quote from Barbara Klunder, for box

"I've made beautiful rugs so that people will enjoy looking at them, and while looking see that they contain a message. All artists draw what they care about and I believe it's the artist's job to wave danger flags. So when people are promoting a good cause, I sympathize and want to help out visually. What art does is important."

DRAFT

Draft copy GLU annual report

HUMAN HEALTH

Background

At the 1989 GLU Annual Meeting, members were alerted to the growing concerns of scientists and communities at risk, that evidence of the effects of toxins on Great Lakes wildlife indicates that similar impacts may occur in human populations. Dr. Theo Colborne spoke to the meeting about her research for the Conservation Foundation's report Great Lakes, Great Legacy?, scheduled for release late in 1989. This report's survey of the health impacts on Great Lakes wildlife and the limited human health data available, led Dr. Colborne to conclude that new research efforts into human health are needed now in the Great Lakes Basin.

Quote from Great Lakes, Great Legacy? (put in box)

"Citizens' concerns will not be put to rest until it is clear that health effects being seen in Great Lakes wildlife are not being manifested in their own offspring.... More effort must be directed toward studies of behavioral, developmental and immune system characteristics as well as of stages of sexual development in growing children."

In response to growing public concern resulting from these findings, GLU formed a Human Health Taskforce at the 1989 AGM. Taskforce members resolved to focus GLU efforts in the next year on human health issues. GLU members resolved to build public support for research needs identified in Great Lakes, Great Legacy? The forum provided by the 1989 biennial meeting of the International Joint Commission was seen as a good opportunity to demonstrate public concerns about health.

GLU activities

In 1989 the GLU Board and staff members worked on a steering committee with scientists, pollsters, public health officials, and other Lake Ontario Organizing Network (LOON) participants to carry out a survey of Lake Ontario residents of their attitudes to health and lake pollution. That survey was conducted by Decima Research in four shoreline communities in New York State and Ontario in late summer. In early October 1989, Pollution Probe released the LOON survey results. The results sent a clear message to politicians, that Lake Ontario residents feel that toxins in the lake do affect their health. The public strongly supported a variety of actions by governments to reduce the levels of toxins in the lake. Eighty-four per cent of survey respondents endorsed the attainment of the goal of zero discharge within ten years.

As well, during the summer of 1989, GLU staff and Board members worked on another steering committee with a health focus. This committee planned a conference sponsored by the State University of New York at Buffalo. This international working conference to evaluate risks to human health associated with exposure to toxic chemicals in the Great Lakes ecosystem, was held in early October 1989. This conference was attended by scientists, public interest groups, government staff and academics who worked intensively for three days to build a consensus on the state of our understanding of health risks associated with the Great Lakes. There are plans to build on this work with tele-conferences involving more of the public in the discussions in 1990.

For most of 1989 GLU worked closely with a coalition of Great Lakes groups convened by Greenpeace to plan to maximize public involvement in the 1989 biennial meeting of the IJC at Hamilton, Ontario, in October. As part of this work, GLU organized the testimony given by citizens on human health to the commissioners. Laurie Montour of the Assembly of First Nations spoke of native groups' concerns about risks associated with their higher exposure and her efforts to do a health survey of Walpole Island Band members. Gaye Gardiner, a Toronto mother who had "action levels" of contaminants in her breast milk, spoke of her inability to get guidance from public health officials on limiting risk to her son. Pam Millar of Pollution Probe presented the LOON survey results, and Sarah Miller, a GLU Board member, summarized the public's concerns that governments have been neglecting the significance of wildlife health implication for Human Health.

At the IJC October meeting, the Canadian government announced that a portion of funds promised in the 1988 Federal Election for Great Lakes clean-up, would go to "The Health Effects Program." In the program, commitments are placed on public participation, biennial reporting of health effects data, and the health status of populations, and exchanges of idea to promote public awareness. In 1989, GLU had made application to the Canadian government to fund a project to survey regulations protecting human health in the Great Lakes basin, with the goal of determining how the public can become more effectively involved in the development of new regulations. As a result of these proposals Environment Canada, Health and Welfare, and Great Lakes United are now discussing a series of activities to further examine public involvement in Great Lakes health decision-making.

#### Looking ahead to 1990

The first project proposal is to be a consultation organized by GLU between Health and Welfare and representatives of sectors of society impacted by Lake pollution. This project will examine Canada's Health Effects Program and other health research and

regulatory initiatives in order to evaluate their effectiveness in addressing public concerns. This meeting, one of the first public consultations undertaken by Health and Welfare Canada, will be convened early this summer. In a second project GLU will examine Canadian regulations from a health protection perspective. This work will be the basis for a Citizens' Guide to Human Health Issues in the basin.

In the next year, GLU will be seeking funding to do a parallel examination of the health components of US federal and state regulations. Once this research is in place, GLU's Board hopes to be in a position to hold a series of workshops on human health and to work with public health groups and educators to better inform the public of ways to limit risks to their health.