

Changing our path: it's all about intention

By Maureen Latta

Once when our executive director was arranging a new Earthcare Balloon booking, the event organizer got on the phone and expressed concern about how our model of the earth, a whopping 22 feet in diameter, would fit through the door of the building. This organizer had never seen the Earthcare Balloon before, so his confusion was understandable. Duane explained to him that there would be no problem. When he arrived on site a few days later, he walked in the door with a small bag in one hand and a fan in the other. "No problem getting through here," he said with a grin.

The Earthcare Balloon is, of course, an inflatable balloon and fully portable. This anecdote bounced around the office today as I was writing this column. And I thought it captured perfectly a dilemma we create for ourselves when it comes to changing our path. Change, whether we're talking about social or personal transformation, has some hidden pitfalls. On our path through the archetypal forest of consciousness transformation, we tend to trip over exposed roots, fall into snares, and sometimes lose our way in the fog.

One of the biggest obstacles can be our own inability to picture how something is going to happen. We know we need to change – become more ecologically sensitive, reduce global warming, create a more economically just society – but most of the time it is difficult, if not impossible,

to visualize how it will be accomplished. How will such an enormous balloon fit through the door?

A friend of mine once said, "In our culture we've got it all wrong. Most people think they need to know how something is going to happen, or else they can't make it happen. So if they can't picture how, they



Lacking awareness, we blindly follow the path ahead, without realizing that we can step off at any time and forge a new one.

give up, thinking it's impossible. But our job is to have an intention. It's not our job to necessarily know how it will happen."

Having an intention is the first step toward both social and personal change. Intention represents the creative force of human thought. Once it is unleashed, all things become possible. Without it, things tend to stay the same. Situations stagnate, life loses its juice, and it feels like problems can't be solved and there's no point trying.

On its own, intention is not enough, of course. Merely wishing something to change is not what I mean by intention. Action tends to follow consciously-made intention, because suddenly new opportunities open up, new alliances are formed, new resources materialize. An obstacle that seemed insurmountable – like how to get a giant balloon through a door – reveals itself as no obstacle at all.

Sometimes our imagination fails us. Especially when it comes to survival issues and fear is a factor. It takes faith and trust to take the first step, make that intention, and then see what happens. Even when we cannot for the life of us see how it can ever be possible, our path is changing. With our intentions, we can direct it, even speed it up.



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GenAssist forms New Generation Co-op to market healthy farm products

GenAssist farmers are one step closer to creating a recognizable brand for their grass-finished meat in Saskatchewan. The group recently registered a New Generation Co-op, called AAA Producers Cooperative Ltd., creating a legal company poised to market a healthy alternative to grain-finished beef.

"The idea behind the name is triple-A quality meat. And AAA gets you near the front of any yellow pages so we should be easy to find," said Rodger Savory, the value-network champion in charge of developing an ethical marketing strategy for GenAssist farmers.

AAA Producers Cooperative Ltd. is a hybrid: half co-op and half private limited company. It is one of only eight such co-ops in the province.

The GenAssist steering committee is working on bylaws for the new company, and Colin McAllister, of Perspect Management Consulting in Regina, is on board as the Cooperative's business development consultant.

The company should be ready in 2013 to start selling all the grass-finished beef they can produce to consumers in Regina and Saskatoon, which means that interested farmers should plan now to save back their

calves so they'll be ready by then. "Our producers need to start thinking now about how to be ready," Savory said.

Any producer in Saskatchewan can participate in AAA Producers Cooperative Ltd. by buying into the co-op with a \$100 member share.

Savory said the initial plan is to market through the internet. While waiting for the first generation of grass-finished

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Pasture-raised cattle, like those at Earthcare's demonstration farm, C-SAW Place near Wynyard, will be marketed to consumers by the New Generation Co-op.

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Earthcare launches re-designed website

Earthcare Connections is revamping the organization's website as part of its mandate to reach a wider public. The new site has been streamlined so that information about Earthcare is easier to access and quicker to read, while photographs display the beauty and abundance of Earthcare's agricultural land base. The content emphasizes three main areas of Earthcare's work: the land conservancy, Earthcare Balloon program, and C-SAW Place.

The new look will help Earthcare to continue developing its identity in an increasingly tech-savvy culture. The internet is one way people stay connected, in cities and in rural areas. For young people in particular, the internet is an important part of their way of life. Farmers are increasingly using the web to market their sustainably-raised products, while consumers look to the power of the web to bypass the supermarket and find healthy, locally grown alternatives.

Organizations like Earthcare can help people interested in sustainable agriculture and food security to connect online to ideas, programming, resources, and like-minded people in Saskatchewan.

"The new website is a start," says Maureen Latta, Earthcare's associate director. "As Earthcare improves its online capabilities, there is a lot of potential for developing online content, such as blogs, podcasts, and video – all with the purpose of helping people move towards a more sustainable lifestyle."

One improvement to the new website is that donations can now be made to Earthcare through Paypal, making it convenient for supporters to contribute to Earthcare's activities and to keep abreast of new developments. Footprints Newsletter will be available as a



Homepage of Earthcare's new site

PDF on the new website, allowing news of Earthcare's work to be available at a click.

The website for Earthcare Connections can be found at www.earthcare.ca

Reflections

"The voyage of discovery lies not in finding new landscapes, but in having new eyes."

- Marcel Proust

Co-op plans internet marketing

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beef, the company plans to start marketing other grass-finished products, such as mutton and goat, and other farm produce such as jams.

Grass finished choice grade is currently in high demand thanks to increasing consumer awareness of the health and ecological benefits of beef raised exclusively on pasture and hay, as opposed to being sent to feedlots and finished with a diet of grain. Savory said the United States imports grass-finished products from Tasmania right now, with restaurant demand forming the largest market. Canadian consumers are increasingly looking to the U.S. to try and access grass-finished meat, with most of that demand coming from Eastern Canada.

The formation of the new Cooperative is

the latest milestone for a group of farmers who first came together a few years ago through a program offered by Genesis Land Conservancy in partnership with Heifer International. The GenAssist program Phase 1 was created to assist young farm families by providing livestock loans. The farmers benefited from help building a herd, but realized that without a marketing strategy that provides a fair price for their livestock, long-term economic sustainability would be difficult. The GenAssist farmers decided that they could do something the big producers don't, which is to finish their livestock on grass. Phase 11 grew out of the need to develop a marketing strategy with the goal of creating a brand easily recognizable to consumers as locally-raised, grass-finished meat.

Board member profile

Ed Bospalko: key player in Earthcare's evolution

When Ed Bospalko joined a team of Saskatchewan people concerned about the disappearing family farm in the late 1980s, he became an important part of the organizations founded to respond to the rural crisis, Earthcare Connections and Genesis Land Conservancy. Ed was the Catholic Church's representative on the Earthcare board and helped to shape the direction the new organization would take.

"It's interesting to see where it came from and where it's going today," Ed said. "I think it's come a long ways and I'm quite happy where it's come to. The seeds that we've sown have grown quite well."



Ed Bospalko

Ed has also seen a change in his own farming practices and in his land. "It looks better; it feels

better," he said. He has a certified organic, mixed farm west of Fort Qu'Appelle, with cattle and grain. Six years ago he started using biodynamic farming methods and, although he admits it's difficult to measure the results, crops are doing well. "You try different things. Whatever's been working for us has been working quite well."

He has noticed a cultural change over the years, too. Consumers, especially younger people, are more interested in the food they eat. "You hear people talking more today about better food quality," Ed said. "It's not 95 per cent, but it's growing."

Ed sees Earthcare continuing

to build on the gains it has made: the Conservancy's land acquisitions, programs for young farmers, and the establishment of a demonstration farm at C-SAW Place. He hopes the farm will turn into a learning center where people have the opportunity to go and learn about farming. There is still much work to be done.

"You have to try and uncouple yourself from the current system," he said. "You've got farmers going in circles and is it really doing the land a benefit?" He'd like to see a more community-oriented agriculture, more diversification beyond grain farming, and healthier food. "I think people at the consumer end are looking for that," he said.

Earthcare welcomes new staff members

The Earthcare administrative team welcomes two new additions: Gerard Woynarski and Maureen Latta.

Woynarski is working for Earthcare as an independent consultant, bringing with him a lifetime of management knowl-



Gerard Woynarski

edge and expertise. Woynarski has been busy working on website development. He is also responsible for reviewing and rewriting Earthcare's organizational processes and procedures.

Woynarski worked for Farm Credit Canada for 32 years,

retired in March 2009, and now provides independent management services to a variety of agriculture related organizations. Woynarski says he decided to work with Earthcare because it allows him to contribute to agriculture in Saskatchewan and because of his own roots in the Wynyard area. "My mother went to school three miles away from C-SAW Place. My heritage is all from the Wynyard area," he says. Woynarski lives in Regina.

Maureen Latta was first introduced to prairie agriculture issues and the need for alternative approaches to food production when she worked as the editor of a Saskatchewan weekly newspaper in the late 1990s. Shortly after that, Latta became involved with the fledgling Earthcare organization as the newsletter editor, and she served a term on the Genesis Land Conservancy board of directors.

To take on her new administrative role as associate director, Latta relocated to Earthcare's headquarters at C-

SAW Place near Wynyard in September. She is enthusiastic about working with an organization that promotes social and environmental change. "I want to contribute to solutions to the problems we've created as a society," Latta says. "I like Earthcare's holistic approach and the variety of activities that it's engaged in." She is responsible for promotional development, communications, and book-keeping.



Maureen Latta

Coming Events

World Food Day
October 16, 2010

**Earthcare Connections
Annual General Meeting**

Legion Hall
Wynyard Royal Canadian Legion
202 3rd St. East
Wynyard SK
October 16, 2010
11 a.m. - 4 p.m.