

The wind may be cold, but it could someday be our best friend

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B11 Lorraine Glazier - Senior Scene

Who has seen the wind?

The month of December has been a windy month. If the wind energy coming ashore here in Bay du Vin could be harnessed and converted into power, it would be at a fraction of the cost of the present energy produced by fossil fuels.

So, if anyone ever refers to you as a "wind bag," for goodness' sake, smile. It means that you are powerful, energy efficient and the environmentalists will love you.

The idea of using wind for power is not a new concept. The concept has been around for over 5,000 years. Wind power has been used to propel sailing ships and has been converted into mechanical energy for pumping water or grinding grain.

In the U.S., the water pumping windmill facilitated farming and ranching in vast areas that had been without accessible water. American Charles F Brush (not Bush) is credited with being the first person to produce electricity using wind power, in the winter of 1887. That same year, a Scotsman, Professor James Blyth, was doing his own experiments and in 1891 he erected a 33-foot-high cloth-sailed wind turbine in the garden of his holiday cottage at Marykirk in Scotland. The energy produced powered the lighting in his cottage, making it the first house in the world to have its electricity supplied by wind power. Professor Blyth offered the surplus electricity to the people of Marykirk for lighting the main street. However, the folks in Marykirk were not impressed. They declined his offer, as they thought that electricity was the "work of the devil."

If you look around, you will see wind mills in use here on the Miramichi. There is one presently in use to aerate a trout pond on a property on the North Black River Road. The wind mill forces air through pipes into the pond, creating more oxygen in the pond, and the result is a healthier pond and stock.

It has taken some time to get serious about alternate energy resources. We are dependent on fossil fuels for energy and production of goods and services. It would not be practical to be completely dependent on any one source of energy, but a combination of alternate resources makes sense and will make a dent in environmental pollution.

The first modern wind turbines were not built until the early 1980s, and more efficient designs are still being developed. Wind power consumes no fuel, emits no carbon dioxide, sulfur, mercury, or any type of air pollution. Danger to birds is often the main concern, but the number killed by wind turbines is extremely low compared to the number that die from other human activities. The Audubon Society has come out in support of wind energy.

Many people hate the sound of the wind. It conjures up emotions of loneliness or feelings of impending doom. The wind can be your best friend or your worst enemy, and like any other force of nature we might harness some of it but we will never control it.

One day a little old lady was walking to church and a fierce wind started to blow. She faced into the wind and struggled to move forward. When she finally arrived at her church, she prayed and prayed that the wind would change direction. Her prayers were answered and she faced the wind all the way home. I guess the moral to this one is, "be careful what you pray for."

Unless the wind turns to hurricane force, I really don't mind the sound of the wind. It has some advantages, especially on a stifling hot day or an evening when the mosquitoes threaten to carry us off to one of the islands in The Bay. We might one day be grateful for the wind, for its energy might help to save this planet from pollution. In the future, a wind turbine next to your home might be as common as the oil tank is today.

I love living by "The Bay." It provides a panoramic view, on a daily basis, of changing winds and weather patterns. The wind, at times, howls, roars and threatens and just when you think it will never quit, it changes direction and suddenly grows silent. The trees stand at attention w

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I was told by someone who worked on its construction that the world's largest windmill is now in operation near Moncton. He also said that the province would have 400 windmills busy creating power by 2012. I have not confirmed either of these statements.

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