

Profile of Silver Donald Cameron

Silver Donald Cameron is a Canadian author, public speaker and educator. His work includes plays, films, radio and TV scripts, magazine articles and 17 books, including two novels. Non-fiction subjects covered in Cameron's work include nature and the environment, history, travel, literature, politics, community development, ships and the sea. Cameron is also a Bullfrog Power customer.



In 2010, Cameron launched TheGreenInterview.com, a subscription-based website featuring interviews with some of the world's leading environmental thinkers, scientists and activists. Through these audio and video interviews, Cameron hopes to assemble a treasure trove of guidance and insights about addressing current environmental challenges and working toward a new era of sustainability.

Some of the "green giants" featured in the interview series include: Dr. William Rees, creator of the ecological footprint concept; Dr. Vandana Shiva, physicist, environmental activist and eco-feminist; Farley Mowat, legendary environmental writer and activist; and James Lovelock, originator of the Gaia theory, which holds that the earth behaves like a single living organism.

You have written articles and spoken on issues related to the environment for many years. When did you first develop an interest in the environment and protecting nature?

It was close to 40 years ago, when I was one of the editors of a magazine called *The Mysterious East*, published in Fredericton, New Brunswick. We covered a lot of stories related to the environment at the magazine, issues like the pollution of the St. John River from pulp mills.

People thought we were alarmist—kind of foolish and hypersensitive. The general view at the time was that the capacity of the air and water to absorb pollutants was more or less infinite, and that natural resources like forests and fish were also infinite. People really didn't believe that human beings could have a substantial impact on the environment.

It's been interesting to watch an environmental consciousness emerge in Canada.

What inspired you to start The Green Interview series?

I've done a lot of interviewing over the years, and I've found that one of the best possible ways to tell a story is through an interview. If you get the right person—somebody who really knows and cares about a subject—and you ask them the right questions and get a good conversation going, an interview quickly unfolds into a compelling story.

In the environmental field, we have a number of genuine superstars, people who have really enriched our understanding and become powerful advocates for change. I had met a number of them over the years, and it eventually dawned on me that interviews would be a wonderful way to get their ideas about the environment out to the public in a very accessible form.

Has there been one profound story or idea from an interview that really moved you?

Lots of them, but here's one. Bunker Roy is an Indian social activist and educator who founded the Barefoot College in India. The College serves the very poor—both in India and internationally—by teaching them to combine traditional knowledge with new sustainable technologies. Bunker shared an inspiring story about one of the College's projects.

This section of the Bullfrog Buzz features green energy heroes within the bullfrogpowered community. Learn about what makes their home or business green, or their work on the environment or green power. If you would like to suggest someone to be profiled in this section, email editor@bullfrogpower.com with his or her name, and details on what makes this person an environmental leader. Or, with permission from the person, post the information on our Facebook wall!

Silver Donald Cameron (left) interviews Bunker Roy (right) as part of The Green Interview series. The interview will be posted on TheGreenInterview.com in 2011.





Two photos of Silver Donald Cameron courtesy of Marjorie Simmins

In villages in Afghanistan, kerosene is used for lighting and heating. Bunker believes that if we can help get clean electricity generation into the villages, then residents will be able to reduce their use of fossil fuels, and they'll have access to new tools like laptops and cell phones. Bunker brings Afghan grandmothers to Barefoot College and trains them to become solar engineers. The women learn how to put together solar panels and wire them up, and how to use charge controllers. These are illiterate grandmothers. When they return to Afghanistan, they are able to install solar panels on their homes and other buildings to power their villages.

The project is helping to improve the environment, and it's also having a profound effect on the community. It's making the women into key players in their village's life. It's really transforming the traditional roles and relationships.

What's your end goal with this interview series? What are you hoping to achieve?

I believe that if we are going to get through this crisis, we can only do it together, using the best ideas from the best minds on the planet. Our goal is to help spread these ideas.

Bill Rees perhaps puts it best. He has said, "Today, for the first time in the history of our species, we've reached the point where my selfish interests are identical to our collective interests. I cannot be sustainable on my own. No country can be sustainable on its own."

What we need, he says, is "a common cultural mythology across the planet" that serves the well-being of the only world we have.

Creating that "common cultural mythology" is what The Green Interview is all about. We are not going to do that all by ourselves, but The Green Interview can make a little contribution to it.

Why did you decide to bullfrogpower your home when Bullfrog Power launched in the Maritimes?

Well, we all have a responsibility to do what we can in our own lives. There's an old saying that I really believe, "If it is to be, it is up to me."

Also, alternate green choices like Bullfrog Power give us a reason for hope. To go back to Bill Rees' point, we really can only be green together. I can't switch to green power if green power isn't available—but when it does become available, there's no excuse for continuing to use dirty power. Ultimately, choosing green power for our home puts into practise what I've been writing about and trying to do for a very long time—and it's the kind of innovation that's absolutely essential.

What other things have you done to reduce your environmental footprint?

We conserve power where we can, and we've increased our insulation to help reduce the amount of power and oil we use. We try to limit our driving and flying, and we buy offsets for the air travel we must do. Nova Scotia has a leading-edge recycling and composting program, so that part is easy—once again, we make it easy to be green by doing it together.

TheGreenInterview.com is hosted by Ethical Hosting in Toronto, which also chooses green electricity with Bullfrog Power. Ethical Hosting purchases offsets for air travel and offers 10 per cent of its pre-tax profits to environmental and social justice causes. We like doing business with people like that.

Bullfrog Power customers can receive a free month's access to TheGreenInterview.com. Email info@thegreeninterview.com and indicate that you are a Bullfrog customer. The Green Interview will send you the instructions to sign up for a free month.

Cycle power

Do you ever find your cellphone running low on battery power in the middle of the day, or do you sometimes forget to charge it overnight? Nokia is launching a product that will enable you to recharge your phone using your bike!

The Nokia Bicycle Charger Kit, which should be available in North America by the end of 2010, includes a small dynamo (an electrical generator), a cell-phone charger and a phone holder for your bike. Attach the dynamo, which is approximately 40.5 x 94.5 mm, to the front wheel and it will generate and transfer electricity to the charger as you are cycling. The charger (70 x 34 x 21 mm) and your cellphone can be attached to your bike handle using the phone holder (142 x 22 x 24 mm).

The kit charges your phone as you ride; however, it does not contain a battery to store the power for future use. According to Nokia, 20 minutes of cycling at a speed of 10 km/h will get you 57 minutes of talk time for a Nokia 1202 phone.

You can use the GPS navigation tool on your phone as you ride and recharge. And, according to online tech magazines, the charger kit will work with other manufacturers' cellphones as long as the charging interface is 2 mm in size.

Here are some things you may want to consider when reviewing this product:

- The minimum speed required to charge your phone is 6 km/h;
- Space around the front wheel and on the handle of your bike for the dynamo and phone holder is required;
- The kit will be priced at about \$20-25;
- The total weight of the kit is about 300 g; and
- The charger comes with a holder specifically designed for a Nokia phone, but it will work with similar types of phones as well.

