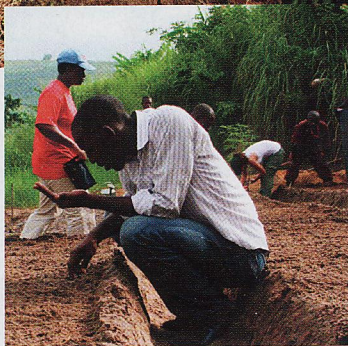


Carole Robert trains "ecopreneurs" to grow medicinal plants in the Congo.

GREEN SCENE

Canadian eco crusaders earn kudos here and around the globe. TEXT: ALANNAH O'NEILL



First place VISION QUEST

Carole Robert is about to board a plane from Tunisia and head to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) when I finally track her down. A bloody civil war, the resurgence of the Ebola virus and an alarming problem with human trafficking have kept the impoverished African nation in the news in recent years.

In spite of this, Robert, the founder of the Biotechnology for Sustainable Development in Africa (BDA) Foundation, is on her way to touch base with her "ecopreneurs"—a group of young volunteers whom Robert is training to cultivate medicinal plants in an environmentally re-

“ I WANTED TO TRAIN A NEW GENERATION TO HARVEST MEDICINAL PLANTS. ”

sponsible way. “A couple of years ago, [the BDA Foundation] was just a vision I had,” says Robert. “I wanted to train a new generation of young people to harvest medicinal plants so that they could earn a living and participate in the world market. The vision was too strong to ignore.”

Sub-Saharan Africa is home to 43 percent of the world's medicinal plants, such as rosemary and aloe vera. The selling and harvesting of these plants

is a \$60-billion annual business for industrialized pharmaceutical companies, but, until recently, local populations were lacking the financial means and technology to grow, process and package these resources. “They only had access to 0.01 percent of the market share,” explains Robert. “I wanted to train our entrepreneurs to earn a living, employ others and participate in the world market—while protecting the forest and biodiversity.”

Since 2006, the BDA Foundation's three-year training program out of Kinshasa has taught 31 ecopreneurs how to harvest and store medicinal plants in accordance with the standards established by the World Health Organization. After the ecopreneurs graduate, they are able to employ up to 100 people in their communities. ▷

Men may be from Mars, but in Jacques Rocher's book, women rule earth—not Venus. “I find that women are more involved in the struggle to preserve our planet, probably because they give life and are faced with this necessity to preserve it more than the rest of us,” explains Rocher, who heads up the Yves Rocher Foundation. “Women are also extremely adept at long-term planning. I meet many men at seminars and conferences, but in the field, it's the women who are making a difference.” Since 2001, Rocher's foundation has made a point of celebrating female eco crusaders from around the globe at its annual Women of the Earth Awards. To date, the botanical-based body-care and beauty company has awarded more than 230 prizes in over 50 countries. This year's first-place international winner was Barbara Ehringhaus from proMont-Blanc. Since 1991, the Swiss-based organization has been lobbying to have Mont-Blanc—the highest mountain in the Alps—designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Read on to find out more about three Canadian winners.

To apply for the 2011 awards, turn to page 173 or visit discoveriesyvesrocher.cafoundation.com.

The BDA Foundation has the support of other notable groups, such as Terre Sans Frontières, the World Wildlife Fund and the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, but Robert says that the support she received from Yves Rocher has been invaluable. (Robert received a \$6,500 bursary as the first-place Canadian winner of the Yves Rocher Women of the Earth Foundation and an additional \$6,500 bursary for winning the Special Mention for Plant Biodiversity Award, also courtesy of Yves Rocher.) “The visibility from Yves Rocher has been a great boost to us. I hope to replicate our initiative throughout Africa,” says Robert. “All of a sudden, everything is happening—the eyes and ears of the world are on us.”

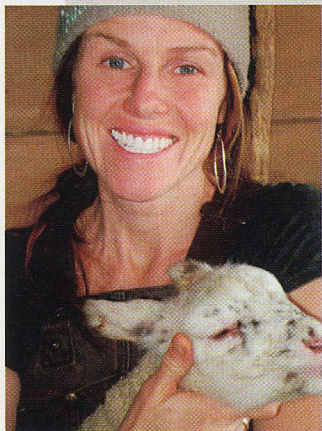
Second place FARM GIRL

KAREN CAMPBELL

Project Everdale Environmental Learning Centre is an educational organization based in Hillsburg, Ont., that teaches children about organic farming and sustainable food issues.

Bio “I come from a long line of sheep farmers,” says Campbell, Everdale’s founder and the winner of a \$3,900 bursary from Yves Rocher. “My interest in farming was passed down to me through my parents—I guess you could say that farming is in my blood.”

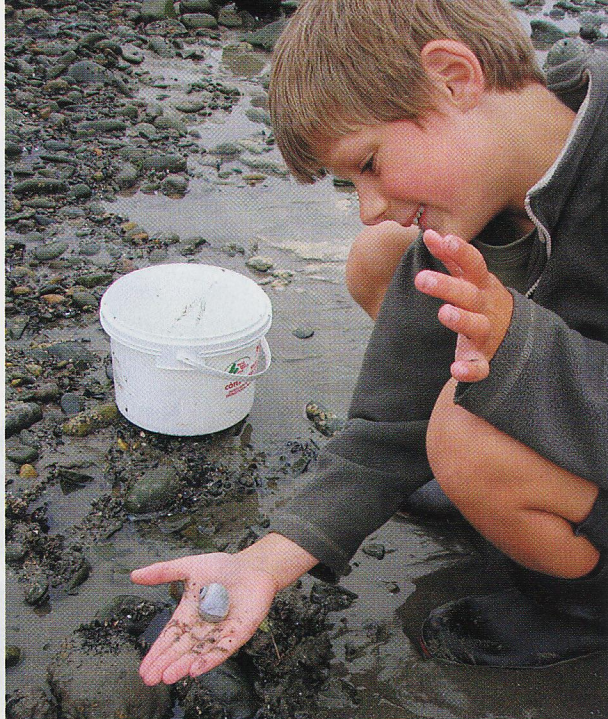
Perks of the job “Helping people to feel something they’ve never felt before is the best part of my job,” says Campbell. “You can see the excitement in the



“ I COME FROM A LONG LINE OF SHEEP FARMERS. YOU COULD SAY THAT FARMING IS IN MY BLOOD. ”

kids’ faces when they try something new, like holding a chicken.”

Outreach “We feel that it’s important to go out in the community and teach other farmers how to be educators,” says Campbell. “The Yves Rocher Foundation has helped us to spread the word. We now have the resources to hold farm-education workshops and events that further promote organic farming and sustainability.”



Third place FORCE OF NATURE

KAREN MCKENDRY

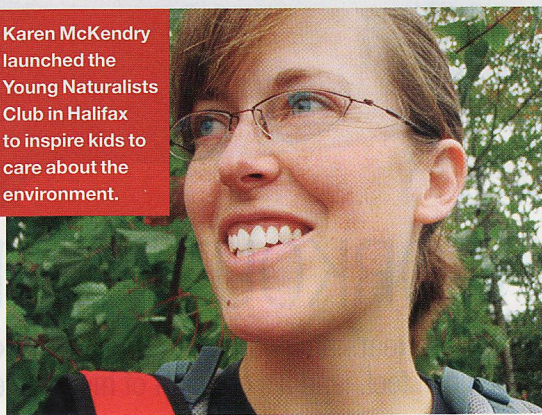
Project The Halifax-based Young Naturalists Club is a free nature club for children aged eight to 12. It teaches them about the natural history of Nova Scotia and how to conserve it.

Bio “I grew up in Ottawa, and my family had a cottage in Quebec,” says McKendry, club founder and winner of a \$2,600 bursary from Yves Rocher. “I always had a passion for getting into nature, but I was also really lucky that I had elders in my family who knew lots about the natural world and could pass on their wisdom.”

Perks of the job “When kids are out in nature and they have an ‘aha!’ moment. I love how intrigued they can be by the environment. It really touches me and makes me happy.”

Inspiration “Meeting the other winners in Montreal at the [Women of the Earth] awards ceremony was really inspiring,” says McKendry. “It’s easy to get discouraged when you’re fighting for the environment, so meeting women who are changing the world and fighting for what they believe in really recharged my batteries.” □

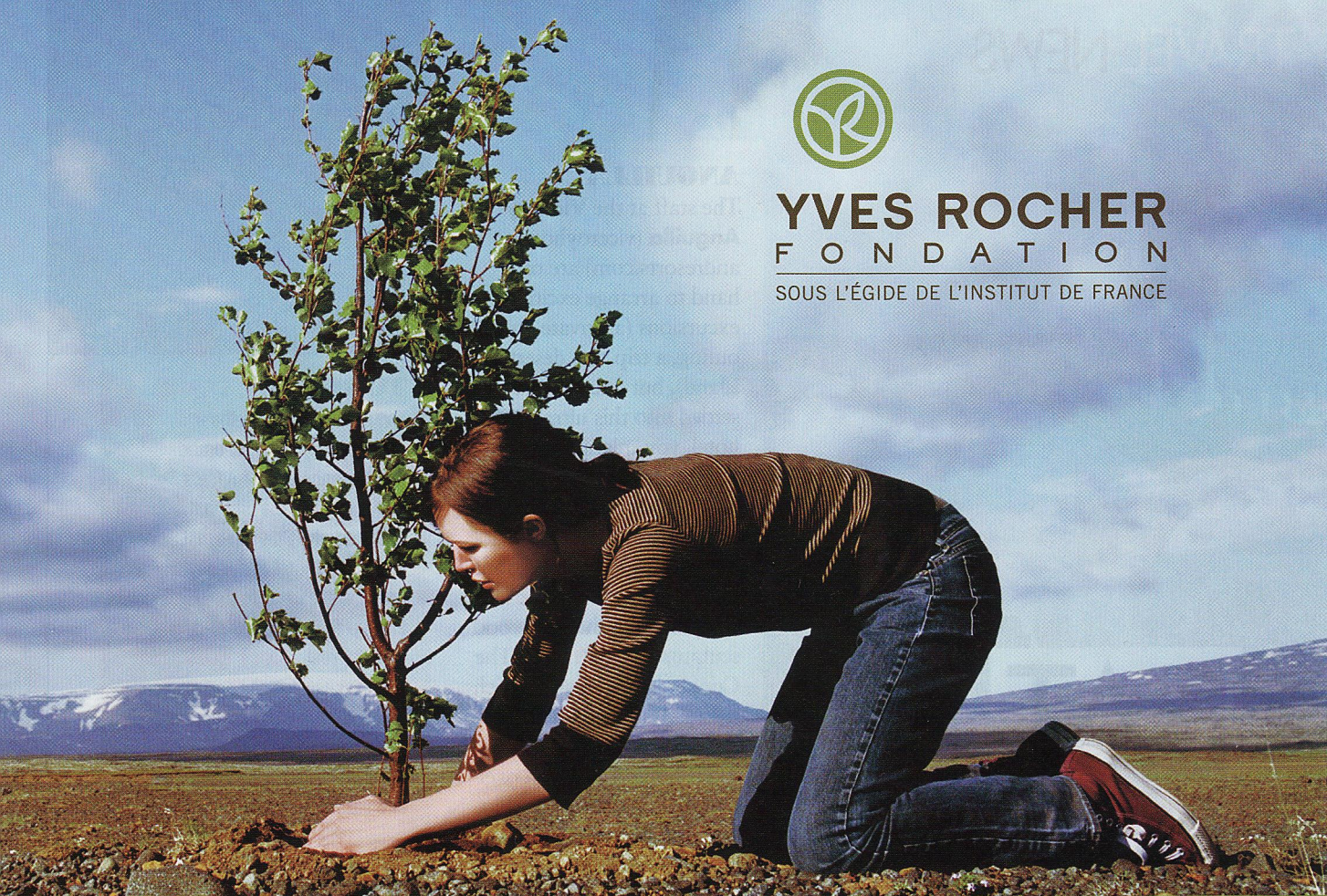
Karen McKendry launched the Young Naturalists Club in Halifax to inspire kids to care about the environment.





YVES ROCHER
F O N D A T I O N

SOUS L'ÉGIDE DE L'INSTITUT DE FRANCE



It's incredible what women can do to benefit nature

The Women of the Earth Awards honour women who act for the good of nature

**TERRE DE
FEMMES**

Are you or someone you know working within an organization or involved in activities that benefit nature?

Let us know by entering the
Yves Rocher Foundation's Women of the Earth Awards

1st Prize: 5,000€ (Euro) | 2nd Prize: 3,000€ (Euro) | 3rd Prize: 2,000€ (Euro)

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about the contest online at: www.DiscoverYvesRocher.ca/fondation
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