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THE HUMAN QUOTIENT OF SCIENCE

Dr. Claire Campbell provides a compelling argument for why historians and the humanities are absolutely essential for a sustainable environment. She feels firmly that no matter how great the scientific argument about an approach to preservation, if it's presented without any consideration for the society living within the natural setting, it won't be realistic.

"As long as sustainability focuses on the life cycle of the bee, we're not going to be advancing the idea of sustainability. There is so much more to consider than the strict biology," says Campbell.

"Discussions about sustainability need to focus on the present and the future, but we can't make an informed decision unless we look at the past and integrate a human context into the solution."

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Scientists have been talking about ocean warming and climate change for years. Marine life and animal populations have experienced alarming changes for some time. Documented research shows us that. But it's only in the last 10 years – perhaps inspired by Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* – that enough people are actually becoming affected in ways that could evoke real change. Campbell feels it's because the scientific realities were finally translated into human language.

Although social scientists aren't the "movers and shakers in sustainability," they need to be much more involved, she says. Campbell was recently named to the interim executive of Dalhousie's new College of Sustainability, where she advises alongside chemists, biologists and physicists, providing historical insight to the issues.

"There are models and precedents in history that we can make use of when considering new approaches," she says. "We want to avoid changing whole ecosystems to get the desired result – instead it's better to study what has been successful in the past. Environmental historians provide that knowledge."

Campbell shows the power of that statement when describing her study of Ontario's Georgian Bay. "If you consider the physical changes that have occurred over the last several centuries, it's imperative to be able to articulate how much change is from human activity and how much is environmental, caused from the natural world pushing back. It's the blend of this knowledge that enables us to save the places that we inherit." ■