

Tribute to Sarah Miller – by Paul Muldoon (June 9 2025)

For probably close to two decades, I worked with Sarah, first as directors for Great Lakes United and later when I was counsel and then Executive Director at the Canadian Environmental Law Association.

At GLU, we travelled together around the Great Lakes meeting incredible people, facing difficult issues of the day and supporting local, regional and basin-wide initiative for a healthy Great Lakes. At CELA, we worked together on issues from the routine (budgets, office management, hiring) to the substantive participating in Great Lakes, national, local environmental campaigns.

Throughout my entire time her, Sarah was the guiding light, the moral compass for things from big to small, and by extension, a moral compass for me. Let me explain what I mean by the statement, as it sheds light why Sarah made an impact on so many people, on so many organizations, and on me.

For example, the usual routine when I worked at CELA would be to seek Sarah out in her office after working hours and huddle, presenting issues that has to be resolved. I would present confidently the proposals as to how to address every issue. Sarah would patiently listen, and then provide a gently worded rebuttal. As a manager and lawyer, my proposals were quick, pragmatic, practical; Sarah however presented a perspective that focused on the long-term, seeking to pursue our collective vision, ignoring the practical impediments and focusing on what was needed to put the issue on an ethical footing, building a just community, and protecting the environment. Time after time, I left the meeting with my perspective truly broadened and enlightened. We did not argue, I was the student and she provided moral guidance. Without exception, the solutions that evolved were better, considered and authentic.

I could give many examples of how her commitment to “doing the right thing.” Many will remember that we moved into the new office space on Spadina and Sarah pursue a simple principle over the stiff opposition of the landlord, space planners, contractors. She wanted everyone to the extent possible to have equal access to sunlight. May I say that the final design was wonderfully unique and equalitarian, a reflection of Sarah herself

Sarah approach to issues was always courageous –whether providing guidance negotiating positions on the Great Lakes agreements or federal toxics legislation, she refused to settle for incremental gains, as she sought solutions to further inter-generational equity, natural justice and environmental integrity. She recognized the “deals” come and go, the fundamental principles of equity and justice can never be compromised.

Since leaving CELA, I miss those conversations with Sarah. But those discussions have had such a profound impact on me, I reflect on them to this day when confronted with difficult issues. I

ask “what would have Sarah thought about this?” and no doubt it cause me to pause and reflect as ask if I am adhering to her fundamental principles. Sarah is embossed in my mind and heart.

I will never forget Sarah. As teacher giving me and those around her the permission and strength to pursue a collective vision of environmental equity and justice; As a colleague, knowing we share the same goals working together in unity and mutual support; and as a friend, knowing no matter how I screwed up, she would have my back, and defend it fearlessly.

Farewell, my teacher, colleague, and friend.