

BILLY BEAVER ENDORSEMENTS

(Arranged alphabetically)

"One is immediately reminded of Watership Down, but instead of rabbits, the story is about beavers written by a biologist who knows beavers as well as anyone in North America. In Watership Down, the social behaviour of rabbits was used to make a subtle commentary on human behaviour. In contrast, Billy Beaver raises our environmental conscience deliberately, directly, forcefully, and elegantly." **Mark S. Boyce**, Ph.D., Biological Sciences, University of Alberta, Canada

"Though written to be accessible to adolescents, Billy Beaver is also a fine read for an adult. It is a beautifully written black allegory in the tradition of Orwell about grandiose expansionism (in this case on the part of a certain smart, hyperambitious beaver) and what happens when ambition overwhelms the supporting ecosystem. The characters are convincingly portrayed and the scenario is plausible and full of fascinating scientific detail." **Andrew Brook**, D.Phil., Rhodes Scholarship Recipient, Philosophy, Director, Institute of Interdisciplinary Studies, Carleton University, Canada

"This surely is a parable for young people imbedded in a society committed to perpetual growth and the notion that he who dies with the most toys wins. We need a wide variety of innovative approaches to changing the trajectory of our cultural evolution. This represents one of the best ways of doing it." **Paul R. Ehrlich**, Ph.D., President, Center for Conservation Biology, Stanford University, CA, Author of HUMAN NATURES

"Billy Beaver is a wonderfully simple tale that cautions against the environmental destruction that comes from insatiable greed. Through the story of this colony of beavers, Michael Aleksuk speaks to the kinds of interpersonal relationships and environmental responsibility that makes for healthy communities. In the story of Billy Beaver is a warning against the devastation that can come from insatiable greed and too much pride in technology and human accomplishments. Together with Billy, we learn that a healthy respect for community, the natural world and age-old traditions makes for a rewarding and stable way of life. It is an allegory for people everywhere, young and old alike." **Robert E. Grese**, Ph.D., Director, Nichols Arboretum, School of Natural Resources and Environment, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI

"A fine welding together of natural history principles with the peculiarities of human nature. It really holds the maturing interest of the reader." **Garrett Hardin**, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, Biological Sciences, University of California at Santa Barbara, CA

"In this intriguing little book, Michael Aleksuk uses his first-hand knowledge of beaver behaviour and of human psychology to demonstrate forcefully that resource development, as it exists today, is anything but sustainable. This important book is a must-read for students, politicians, resource managers, environmentalists, native groups and indeed anyone who gives serious thought to the ecological plight of future generations." **David Jones**, D. Phil., Botany, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL (Dr. Jones was the last undergraduate student of renowned geneticist R.A. Fisher at Cambridge, and earned his doctorate under the supervision of world-famous E.B. Ford at Oxford.)

"Billy Beaver achieves that rare combination of wisdom and entertainment. This engaging and informative story tells us much about beavers and, even more, about ourselves. Imbedded in this marvelous tale is the parable of our modern humanity, of how and why we need to find the path to harmony and compatible relation to a healthy and diverse natural world. Beyond the over-emphasized virtue of sustaining nature as a source of material wealth and physical comfort, Michael Aleksuk informs us of how the experience of nature can also engender the capacities for justice, intellect, morality, and beauty. He reminds young people that material security and success is the means not the end to all our striving, and how the natural world remains the anvil on which we may forge lives of meaning and grace." **Stephen Kellert**, Ph.D., School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, Yale University, New Haven, CT

"Billy beaver is an appealing and yet powerful story that addresses critical environmental problems facing mankind. It will appeal across a wide range of ages. Children, including even pre-schoolers, will enjoy the suspense and imagery, while adults will appreciate it as a skillful blend of psychology, aesthetics, and ecological principles." **William Lidicker, Jr.**, Ph.D., Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California at Berkeley, CA

"This delightful allegory by one of Canada's prominent behaviorists and conservationists conveys important environmental messages that all of us should heed." **L. David Mech**, Ph.D., U.S. Geological Survey, North Central Forest Experimental Station, St. Paul, MN

"Billy Beaver is a pragmatic allegory depicting our relentless modern pursuit for ever-increasing achievement. The resulting materialistic abundance is generally perceived as a good thing. Unfortunately, it is in fact a short-sighted progression that ultimately threatens the continuation of life on our planet. Billy Beaver will inspire unadulterated young minds before they are mired in open competition, escalating success and the need

for status. This parable conveys a crucial message for adolescents who are concerned about their futures. However, it is also certain to make many adults question their own materialistic existence. **Rudy Melster**, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Science, School of Medicine, University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

"Aleksiuk's Billy Beaver wades into territory that is dangerous; it takes great skill to write an allegory on a topical subject without seeming trite or bludgeoning. Aleksiuk succeeds. Billy Beaver is a story that has enough of the ecologist in it to make the accounts plausible, enough of the outdoorsman it to make the scenes vivid and enough of the story teller in it to keep the plot engaging. This adventure will appeal to those who enjoy a good tale and to those who like to see a little environmental wisdom in what they read." **Thom Meredith**, Ph.D., Geography, McGill University, Montreal, Canada

Billy Beaver is a charming story that will convey to young people a powerful message about the environmental costs of excessive ambition. **Frank C. Miller**, Ph.D., Anthropology, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN

"*Billy Beaver* is an important environmental allegory of our times. As such, it should be read by young and old; and a cartoon-style version should be produced for the very young.

I congratulate Michael Aleksiuk, and encourage him to consider *Billy Beaver* as the first in a series. We know much more about the environment than we did 50 years ago, but we do not know how to translate this knowledge into real-world solutions of the many interconnected environmental issues that confront us. Our main problem, of course, is that sustainable development embraces not only ecological and economic elements but also ethical ones. But most scientists, economists, business people and politicians are not prepared to debate ethical questions.

First Nations peoples teach their children about right and wrong, not through a series of Ten Commandments but through "stories" that illustrate the consequences of wrongdoing. Let's try this approach — demonstrated so well in *Billy Beaver* — more often!"

R. E. (Ted) Munn F.R.S.C., Professor Emeritus, Institute for Environmental Studies, University of Toronto, Canada

"Michael Aleksiuk has penned an intriguing exposé in which is hidden a masterful discourse on the quest for sociological status — power — and its environmental consequences. The book is particularly timely given that the greatest crisis facing human survival is environmental destruction. Aleksiuk has encapsulated the essence of the problem for Generation-E in the allegory of beavers." **Robert W. Murphy**, Ph.D.,

Centre for Biodiversity and Conservation Biology, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada

“Billy Beaver, as an allegorical narrative, brings together knowledge of beaver biology, an understanding of important aspects of human behavior, and the art of story telling. Michael Aleksiuik’s multidisciplinary approach offers us insights into the impacts of our egotistical and status-seeking behavior on the environment. Do not be fooled by the seeming simplicity of this tale, for it constitutes a profound analysis of a major human flaw that must be corrected if we are to avoid the destruction of the biosphere and thus ourselves.” **Bernard O’Dwyer**, Ph.D., English and Medicine, Memorial University, St. John’s, Canada

"Billy Beaver delivers a powerful message about our world and the often forgotten link between personal attachment, community and the environment. Its simple narrative goes straight to the heart of one of the most pressing issues of our time." **Tiffani Razavi**, D.Phil., Department of Management, University of Southampton, Highfield, Southampton, England

Billy Beaver is at first sight a children’s story. It is that, but it is much more as well. Most adults are already familiar with the social behaviour covered by this book, but as far as I know no one has considered that behaviour in an environmental context. Therein lies the deeper meaning of Billy Beaver, one that will concern adults: the book brings together two important phenomena — the striving for social status and the state of the environment — in an entirely new way. The relationship between these two phenomena will be of major interest to the intellectual community. **Arthur Schafer**, Ph.D., Department of Philosophy, Director of the Centre for Professional and Applied Ethics, University of Manitoba, Canada.

The beaver is widely recognized as a symbol of Canada's boreal region. Aleksiuik's allegory is "right on" for a biome that is currently being trashed at a breathtaking rate, and by a country that prides itself on selling its natural resources cheaply to rich countries that have already exhausted their own resources by unsustainable activities.

Beavers have many similarities to humans. Typically, they invade and develop a stream section, increasing rapidly and removing all of the trees that are valuable to them, after which they disappear, only to re-surface and repeat the whole drama elsewhere. This process is reminiscent of the Sumerians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Romans and other human societies that faded shortly after exceeding their environmental thresholds. It seems that we have no more ability to profit from past mistakes than the beaver does. **David W. Schindler**, D.Phil., Rhodes Scholarship Recipient; Killam Memorial Professor of Ecology, University of Alberta, Canada; winner of the Stockholm Water Prize and Volvo Environment Prize.

“In this creative allegory — at once charming and sobering — one beaver’s dream of acquiring enormous personal status through environmental exploitation turns into a nightmare of resource depletion and community destruction (as well as lost love). It’s an example of what Garrett Hardin called “The Tragedy of the Commons” in a classic paper written years ago. Unfortunately, we continue to see examples like this in the real world all too frequently, where individuals and groups pursue personal short-term gain by exploiting natural resources at an unsustainable rate, to the detriment of future generations. Astute environmental scientists realize that, unless societal values change, the situation will soon reach disastrous proportions on a global scale.

Aleksiuk presents this crucial message — that dire long-term consequences will follow unfettered exploitation of limited natural resources — very effectively, employing a writing style that teenagers will be able to understand. The story should help to raise the environmental awareness and alter the values of young people in a way that may make Billy Beaver part of our popular culture. I can envision adults in the future, who were brought up on “Billy Beaver” as youngsters, having interactions in which one person (e.g., a resource manager) admonishes another (e.g., a developer) by saying something like, “I think you’re having a Billy Beaver dream here.”

The book could be incorporated into school curricula around the world, for the lesson of sustainable development it sets forth is applicable everywhere. After the book catches on, we will all benefit, making this an impressive writing achievement, indeed.” **A. Robert Sherman**, Psychology, University of California at Santa Barbara, CA

Billy Beaver is a powerful novella that can be read both aesthetically and rhetorically. Lively and animated, it will delight readers of all ages and backgrounds because its music speaks to their hearts and souls. Billy Beaver will inspire and impress all those who can appreciate witty, creative, and insightful discourse about serious environmental issues. **Anna Smolova**, Ph.D., English, New River Community College, Dublin, VA

"Case studies are well-recognized for their power in communication. Michael Aleksiuk brings human behaviour and biological processes together in this imaginative and light reading through a wonderful tale. He masterfully demonstrates the dependence of life on ecosystems in a way that will resonate well with people of any age, any culture, and from any interest group. He shows how ego and greed have set humanity on a catastrophic path. Yet, he is able to instill hope that a path of simplicity and humility is within reach for the young among us and for future generations." **Colin L. Soskolne**, Ph.D., F.A.C.E. Faculty of Medicine, University of Alberta, Canada

“Billy Beaver is a well-crafted tale which has strong credibility because it is based on sound beaver biology, fundamental human behaviour, and the real world around us. The environmental allegory tells the very human story of greed and pomposity that characterizes those who place 'status and power' at the top of their agendas. Of course WE would never do that, we say to ourselves, yet we leave a long trail of evidence that we have been at least as unwise as Billy. The scary part is that almost every one of us knows a Billy Beaver, but we rarely recognize the Billy Beaver within ourselves. This is a book that everyone over the age of 12 should read and keep for the rest of their lives. ‘Billy Beaver’ is not just for children; adults will enjoy it too. For example, I am 62, and found it to be a great read”. **Iain Taylor**, Ph.D., Chair, Botany, U.B.C., Vancouver, Canada

“Billy Beaver is a charming story that explores the notion of engineering versus environment, and excessive desire versus satisfaction. As an allegory that reminds every ambitious builder that wasting and wanting are anathematic to happiness, Billy Beaver gnaws through the energy of greed to arrive at the energy of conservation.” **Aritha van Herk**, English, University of Calgary, Canada

"Michael Aleksuk has created a tale for our times. He holds a mirror to contemporary society and what we see reflected is the destructiveness of greed, vanity and ambition. 'Billy Beaver' can be read by children but it should be read by adults as well." **Stuart Walker**, Ph.D., Associate Dean Academic, Faculty of Environmental Design, University of Calgary, Canada.
