



Spring 2012

GICEL

Over ten years of bringing nature experiences to all

<http://www.gicel.ca>

Supporting Our Grandchildren

I have been spending a lot of time over the past few months thinking about the future; not so much about my own future, but about the future of my children and grandchildren. I know I am by no means alone in this. References abound from Presidents, Prime Ministers, Premiers, climate scientists to ordinary folks about their concern for the kind of world we are bequeathing to our children and grandchildren.

Frances Moore Lappé (you may know of her from her best-selling book of a few years ago, *Diet for a Small Planet*) writes in her new book, *EcoMind* (2011), that people have a deeply felt need to feel that our lives count for something big. She says that “one way human beings over eons have met this need is by striving to be good ancestors—enhancing our children’s and their children’s futures. . . We can each find meaning in thinking about what we will say one day when our children or grandchildren ask us, ‘Granddaddy, Grandma, what did you do to stop climate change?’ ”

I suspect there will be a number of parents and grandparents reading this Newsletter. What is our answer to Lappé’s imagined question? How do we **feel** about the answer? The worst thing we can do is feel guilty. Because guilt or blame does not inspire action.

I am convinced that the best thing we can do is to be proactive in areas that are under our control. Like sitting down with our grandchildren and reading them Dr. Seuss’s story of *The Lorax*—or taking them to see the new film about *The Lorax* just released. My wife and I have a date to do that with at least two families of our grandchildren in Vancouver during Spring Break.

Another thing we can do is sponsor our grandchildren to take a GICEL summer program in which they will learn about their intimate connection to the Earth. I know that many grandparents have already done that. I



plan to do it myself this summer. I have been waiting for my two grandsons, Ben and Will to be old enough for that. At eight and six they now tell me they're ready. If you think you would like to do this for your grandchildren, or you know someone who might, please go to our website at www.gicel.ca to register. Don't leave it too long. The programs fill up quickly.

Besides supporting our own grandchildren in an ecological learning program, we can assist other children by making a donation to GICEL. You will find information about how to do that elsewhere in this Newsletter. Donations help us to keep the cost for a week's program to only \$175, and we know from experience of offering these programs for more than ten years that they have life-changing impacts on the children who participate.

There is now no doubt that our grandchildren are going to be facing enormous challenges in managing the world when they are of age. In addition to the kind of geopolitical conflicts that we have known, they will face the difficulty of managing on a hotter, more crowded, energy constrained, resource depleted planet; as well as operating in a debt burdened economic system. That's what we are bequeathing to them. Given this situation, the most important thing we can do now is to work with them, to prepare them as best we can for the challenges ahead, and instill in them a mindframe to see themselves as engaged in the great work of restoring balance between human activity and the natural world. I am writing about that in a blog called "Grandparents for the Future." If you would like to know more about that I invite you to go to www.grandparentsforthefuture.wordpress.com.

Most important of all, however, is to support the work of GICEL, spread the word about what we are doing, and help us work together with all other like-minded groups to be the change we want to see in the world.

Desmond Berghofer PhD
Chair

Report from Board Chair For Year January 1, 2011 to December 31, 2011

In 2011 the Board continued to oversee the offering of GICEL's Summer Earth Education Programs and other activities. Reports of our work are found elsewhere in the Newsletter.

Board Membership

As of December 31, 2011 the members of the GICEL Board of Directors were: Desmond Berghofer (Chair), Mike Hoebel (Vice-Chair), Jeff Hopkins (Recording Secretary), Shelly Johnson (Treasurer), Michael Dunn (Programs), Cate MacEwan, and Steve Dunsmuir.

Board Meetings

Meetings of the Board were held on April 1, 2011, June 10, 2011, October 7, 2011.

The AGM was held on April 1, 2011.

Desmond Berghofer PhD
Chair



Summer Earth Education Program 2011

by Michael Dunn

GICEL's SEEPs started with a twist this summer: a two-day leader training camp on Galiano Island in early July. This event set the tone for the summer programs to come, enabling leaders from Salt Spring, Pender and Mayne to meet, share stories and collaborate



on workshops focusing on leadership skills such as successful communication, leader roles and taking positive initiative. Junior leaders were able to share their favourite game/activity and receive supportive feedback on their techniques from other leaders. This event really set a strong foundation for further skill development throughout the summer program and was identified as a highlight by many leaders at the end of the month. We intend to make the leadership training program a powerful GICEL tradition for years to come.

This year 160 participants in our Summer Earth Education programs (SEEP) explored together, learned together and played together in the forests, freshwater and marine environments of the Gulf Islands. Components of the Gulf Islands National Park Reserve, Burgoyne Bay Provincial Park as well as regional and community parks found on each of Salt Spring, Pender, Mayne and Saturna islands were the venues for the 2011 programs. Participants had hands-on experience in understanding

forest ecosystem dynamics, multi-sensory explorations, bird migrations, marine food chains and food pyramids, wildcrafting and food plants, geology, journaling and self-reflection. Specifically, activities included building a marine ecosystem in an aquarium, simulating bird migrations from breeding to wintering grounds and back, geo-caching and orienteering, mask and nature art, bird flight simulation using kites, fossil hunting and simulated oil spill cleanup. The Saturna participants were able to observe a large pod of Orca whales close up at East Point; a very exciting learning opportunity.



Mayne Island SEEP

The summer 2011 program ran for a total of 7 weeks: 2 weeks on Mayne Island; 3 weeks on Salt Spring Island; 1 week on Pender Island; and, 1 week on Saturna Island. Total enrollment for the summer program was slightly higher - 160 versus 159 in 2010. In 2011, our summer programs were able to provide part-time summer employment for a total of 8 adults and 15 young people within the island communities where GICEL operates.



Mayne Island SEEP intertidal

Again, the generous donations from community organizations allowed us to be able to provide bursaries for children desiring to attend our programs. This year these organizations contributed almost \$7,000 for this purpose. Local grocery stores on Salt Spring and Mayne islands also provided vouchers valued at a total of \$1350 for food supplies toward the leaders' camp and SEEP snacks.

Other Activities for 2011

During 2011, GICEL purchased non-profit rights to present the documentary “*Play Again. Ground Productions 2010*”, which explores the question of the consequences of a childhood removed from nature, particularly with respect to the increased time spent in front of screens (television, computer, cell-phone). As this issue is at the core of what GICEL programs are designed to counteract, the film was presented to four island communities over the year. These presentations were facilitated by GICEL’s Michael Dunn and included a post screening

open discussion among community members attending. The response this film invokes in people is very high, particularly among parents with pre-teen and teen-aged children. The film’s purpose is to highlight the growing disparity between the time spent in virtual versus natural worlds and the impacts of this disparity on childhood (human) development while following a group of teens on their first wilderness camping trip. All who viewed this film found the message very disturbing but also came to the realization of the value of programs like those provided by GICEL to the well being of children and our future.

In February 2011, GICEL was invited to set up an information booth at the Tapestries 2011 conference jointly hosted by the school districts of Sooke, Victoria and the Gulf Islands. One of the conference themes was on nature deficit disorder and environmental education within schools. The booth was well received and great connections were made with the Oceans Network, currently working on ocean curricula for highschools in Canada



Glenlyon-Norfolk School Program

and the outreach program for the refugee centre in Victoria. Follow-up with these two initiatives is expected over the next year.

In April 2011, GICEL provided a one-day marine ecosystem exploration day for the students of Glenlyon Norfolk school in Victoria. An age appropriate program was designed for groups of students ranging from pre kindergarten to grade 7 over the day. The younger students got to observe how the upper intertidal zone is alive with decomposers and built a scale



Glenlyon-Norfolk School Program

explored the beach and intertidal zone using their other senses instead of sight and learned about intertidal ecosystem dynamics. The next group did free exploration to find the creatures that inhabited the intertidal zone and observed their function in the system and some of their behaviours. The older groups built model marine ecosystems, one for the intertidal zone and one for the near subtidal zone. Two aquaria were used for this purpose. The first group of students collected representative plant and animal species making up intertidal ecosystems for one aquarium. The second group of students assisted with a beach seine net and used the second aquarium to house creatures and plants found in deeper water. In all, 225 students participated in this day of discovery.

The feedback from teachers and attending parents was very positive. The students themselves had a great time learning about a

piece of their home place.

September 2011, the Child in Nature Network and others hosted the “Healthy by Nature” conference in Vancouver. (see www.childinnature.com website for detailed video and transcripts of the proceedings). This conference was an integration of health professionals, urban sociologists and planners, and nature awareness program providers. The synergy among these seemingly disparate groups was amazing and many collaborative endeavours were proposed and launched at this time. GICEL was represented and participated in the many workshops and discussion groups that formed the core of the last two days of the conference. Potential follow up actions for GICEL were identified and will be pursued during 2012.

NEW PROGRAMS!

Environmental Leaders Apprenticeship Program

During 2011, GICEL directors and summer staff worked on the feasibility of creating a new program aimed at youth 13 to 17 years of age. Our current programs take youth to age 12 and after that there are not too many similar programs for those who have a desire to learn



Linnea Farm School

and develop more skills in nature based learning and leadership. The concept of developing a program on the model of an apprenticeship training for teens interested in become more knowledgeable about environmental themes and issues and learn the tools to become



leaders, was conceived. At the same time, members of the Linnea Farm Society of Cortes Island approached GICEL about the possibility of using their school facility to run residential nature-based programs. During Spring Break, a meeting at Linnea Farm was held to discuss interest, expectations, logistics and possible costs of holding a pilot 7 day program sometime during the summer months. The meeting resulted in a general agreement and understanding for GICEL and the Linnea Farm Society to start developing the program feasibility and costs.

The farm includes over 300 acres of farm and forest lands which are available for programming. The farm property is strategically located with public access to outstanding marine and freshwater areas. Cortes Island itself is semi-remote and offers a great potential experience for southern Gulf Island teens to experience an ‘away’ adventure.

Summer 2012 is the potential launch of

this new program if all the logistical and financial aspects can be put in place. Monitor our website for updates (www.gicel.ca).

Gardening/food security Program

On Pender Island in August 2012, GICEL will pilot a week long day program for 6-12 year olds on food growing and food security. The intent is to have the participants receive hands-on experience in the development, planting and care of a vegetable garden while also learning about our food supply and where food comes from. Check out the dates and contact information for this program further in this issue.

Looking to 2012

GICEL will continue to look at appropriate opportunities to broaden its programs to include young teens, teachers and families as well as create sustained partnerships with such organizations as Linnea Farms, the Bateman Foundation and others to deliver our unique programs.

Personalized Learning

by Jeff Hopkins

“Personalized Learning” is a term that is gaining prominence in the BC education community. Indeed, it is one of the touchstones for the transformation planned by the BC Ministry of Education. So what is it?

Since the answer to that question is still being debated, I can tell you what the Gulf Islands School District has contributed so far in defining the term. Personalized learning is the recognition that each learner should be the starting point. Curriculum, assessment, how learning is demonstrated, how students are grouped, and how teachers can help facilitate that learning is all determined through a co-construction process between school and learner.

Interestingly, as this vague description in some way raises more questions than answers, it is likely just as important to explain what personalized learning is NOT:

- It cannot be a modularized, pre-packaged, content-based curriculum accessed by electronic device (this is one conclusion people jump to when they hear about learning anywhere, anytime). While there is indeed much content that can be accessed virtually, we know that learning still benefits from



teaching: that act of moderating content, guiding the learning process based on what the teacher knows about the learner and her/his potential, and providing critical and explicit feedback on learner performance and demonstration as a means of guidance.

- It cannot be about just offering more items on the menu. We could never meet all the needs if each concept or topic area needed to be thought of as independent courses on a timetable. More interdisciplinarity and project-based learning is required, where the learning subject matter provides jumping-off points in to many other areas of inquiry. The environment and the natural world become very important themes in this kind of learning organization.
- It cannot be the wild west; some structures, albeit new ones, are required to organize the resources – human and otherwise – necessary to support learning.
- It cannot be an abandonment of important foundational skills. In fact, more foundational skills are required if learners are to develop into more engaged, more responsible learners as they get older. Those foundational skills, however, should not be taught only in isolation or in a rote way. When concepts are introduced in a natural context that they are most easily internalized and not merely memorized.
- It cannot be deploying existing resources in the same way as we do currently and expect different things to happen. How we organize time, space, human connections, and other learning resources will make or break any changes. Because we are talking about a system, more than one element needs to change if that change is going to be sustained and supported.

We all look forward to seeing how Personalized Learning becomes more clearly defined over the next few months and years in BC. The opportunity for positive change and for the natural environment to take centre stage in student learning has perhaps never been better.

Saturna Ecological Education Centre Enters Second Successful Semester

by Teagan Gosling, SEEC student

Saturna Ecological Education Center, or SEEC, is a nature based program on beautiful Saturna Island. We live right near Haggis Farm, in a little clearing called Haggis Hollow. We live in two six bunk cabins that are slanted up so we get maximum sunlight and privacy. The cabins were built by volunteers under the direction of architect Richard Blagborne.

This semester, we have 12 students in grades 7-12 who come from Surrey, Victoria, Vancouver, Langley, Mission, Richmond and Gabriola, Pender and Salt Spring Islands. We all have little buddies from the Saturna Island Elementary School, who we work with almost every week. As part of our curriculum, our five courses are IDS (Independent Directed Studies), along with Environmental Communication (English), Outdoor Adventures (PE), Teaching and Learning as well as Ecological Citizenship (Science and Tech).

So far this term, we have been to the Campbell's farm, where we built fences and played with the ewes (mummy sheep), and the lambs. We learned how to take down fences, put up fences, cleaned the pens, and found out that riding sheep is a bad idea (just joking. There was no sheep riding) and saw sheep dogs at work.

Fiddlers Cove was also a fun adventure. We went along the top of some scenic bluffs, down a little valley, and onto the beach. We played around in the sand, and then went along the shore to some sandstone caves where we had a photograph of the group. Some of us played log tag (like freeze tag, but on logs only) and some of us played witches (making pretend jelly, orange juice and chocolate chip cookies).

On Valentine's Day, our little buddies from the Saturna School came along and we

went on a 'Shared Ordeal.' A 'Shared Ordeal' is a very long hike across Saturna through the bush where, at the end, everybody is always very tired and often wet and muddy. We went from the Saturna School, to Haggis Hollow, back down to the valley, up a waterfall between two mountains, along some bluffs, down to a pond and then down by the ocean where we would be camping out overnight.

On Saturna, there is an amazing Rec. Center to which Saturna Ecological Education Society (SEES) bought everybody memberships. This means that we have unlimited access to the facility where there are showers, a gym, computers, WiFi, a kitchen, and more. We go down there every Tuesday night, in our spare time.

Winter Cove is an amazing place. When we went down there, we did an activity where we marked the trail, walked 20 steps, marked that, and then hid little plastic animals between the marks, and had other groups try to find all the animals. There is also Boat Pass, which is a very small channel (20 meters across) between two islands. Depending on the tide, the water is flowing very fast through the channel, and it is fun to chuck small bits of wood into the current and watch them float away at top speed.

As part of our English mark, we do haiku poems often in the forest, by ourselves, for about 20 minutes or so. This is very relaxing, just sitting in the forest with no other contact with other humans. This also can create a very inspirational environment, which is why we do our haikus in the forest.

Right now, SEEC and SEES are fundraising for alternative energy systems to install at Haggis Hollow. We could also use a back-up generator and camping equipment. Contact us at sdunsmuir@sd64.bc.ca or visit us at www.seec64.ca. We are accepting applicants for the fall semester! If you know anyone going into grade 11 or 12 next fall and looking for a whole new adventurous way to "do school", please send them our way!

SEEC Middle Years on Salt Spring Island

Our school district currently offers many excellent programs for middle years learners and we are always exploring new ideas for diversifying the educational options available to the families and learners of the Southern Gulf Islands. With that in mind, we have been considering a few interesting questions...

What if you took all the best aspects of the Saturna Ecological Education Centre (SEEC) and could create a multi-age, place-based learning community in the Ganges area where students from all of our islands could come together in one exciting Middle Years ecological education cohort?

And, what if Salt Spring Island was your program's home base, but your students also explored and interacted with all of

the other islands so that the Southern Gulf Islands became their amazingly diverse and exciting natural classroom?

School District #64 is exploring just such a possibility and is distributing more specific information about this program idea to families throughout the Gulf Islands in order to evaluate the level of interest in such an educational option. With an information meeting scheduled for Thursday, March 25 at 7 pm in the Salt Spring Middle School library, we are looking to collect enough applications of interest by April 1 in order to make this program a reality for the fall of 2010.

Such a program would be modeled on the current SEEC program, which is in its third year of operation on Saturna Island. This program has attracted students from Saturna, Galiano, Pender, Nanaimo, Victoria, Vancouver and Salt Spring Island, though the commute for off-

island learners has been quite challenging. By centralizing the popular Middle Years part of the program in Ganges, most students will have much easier access to SEEC's unique approach to ecological, constructivist and experiential education.

Much is still to be determined based on feedback from our communities, but the basic idea at the moment is to invite learners in grades 5 to 8 to enroll in one multi-age learning community featuring differentiated instruction, regular overnight experiences at the Haggis Hollow Outdoor Learning Centre on Saturna Island, and a blurring of the lines



Saturna SEEP Marine Food Web

between school and community. Many details such as the actual site, resources, staffing and partnerships with other schools have yet to be worked out, but Steve Dunsmuir, founder and current principal educator at SEEC, will be the program coordinator and main teacher.

For more information, please contact Steve Dunsmuir at Saturna School (250 539 2472) (email: sdunsmuir@sd64.bc.ca).

This program may be a good fit for students who like to be adventurous, hands-on, outside, active, and immersed in nature, yet it will not be the best educational option for every learner. Students will be expected to become increasingly independent, while also responsible for the health and vibrancy of their interdependent learning community. Students who prefer traditional routines, being plugged into electronic devices, always being comfortable, relying on others for their learning or entertainment, and staying clean, would definitely find SEEC to be a major challenge!



2012 SEEP Dates

July 30 to August 4, 2012 (proposed)

Environmental Leadership Apprenticeship Program – Cortes Island. Contact: Michael Dunn (gicel@gicel.ca)

Salt Spring Island

July 9 to July 27, 2012 (not including weekends).
Contact: Michelle Spencer (msspencer@sd64.bc.ca).

Pender Island

July 17-21, 2012.
Contact: Julie Johnston (greenhearted@shaw.ca)

August 13 to 17, 2012. Growing Food program.
Contact: Julie Johnston (greenhearted@shaw.ca).

Mayne Island

July 30 to August 3, 2012 –
Mayne Island (if Cortes not held). Contact: Jessica Willows (jwillows@sd64.bc.ca).

August 6 to 17, 2012 (not including weekend)
Mayne Island. Contact: Jessica Willows (jwillows@sd64.bc.ca).

Saturna Island

August 20 to 24, 2012.
Contact: Jessica Willows (jwillows@sd64.bc.ca).



Marine Creature Masks

Testimonials

“Excellent outdoor experience - healthy all weather and working in groups (cooperation)..”

Grandparent of SEEP participant 2011

“The best things about the program were the amazing leadership and tutorialship from the experienced leaders! The experiential learning activities and the junior leaders ...”

Parent of SEEP participant 2011

“... it was great that the kids learned a few things about marine animals and were enthusiastic about it, which showed that they had fun at the same time they learned.”

Parent of SEEP participant 2011

Supporting GICEL

Mike Hoebel

Each year GICEL provides outstanding learning experiences for children through its Summer Earth Education Program (SEEP). Several local organizations provide funding support to allow GICEL to offer bursaries to families so their children can attend SEEP. We also invite individuals who believe in GICEL's goals to consider making a personal donation to allow us to expand the SEEP programming and increase the number of families and children receiving assistance.

GICEL is a Canadian registered charity and our donors receive official donation receipts (also referred to as 'tax receipts'). To donate please go to the GICEL website's donations page (<http://www.gicel.ca/donate>) and click on the CanadaHelps button. This will take you to a CanadaHelps page where you can make your donation online, as well as take out an individual or family GICEL membership, or even become a Charter member of GICEL.

Alternatively, if you would prefer to send your donation by cheque through the mail, please see the details on the following page.



G.I.C.E.L.

Gulf Islands Centre for Ecological Learning

Throughout the world awareness is spreading that people must form a new relationship with the Earth—one that will allow civilization to prosper rather than flounder in global conditions hostile to life. The key to building this new relationship is ecological learning. For more than ten years GICEL has championed the new learning programs that must one day be taught to all children.

We are honoured that you are a supporter of this good news story and we ask that you help us to strengthen our programs and to reach out to many more students by supporting us again with a donation.

Here is my contribution to GICEL

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Send a Child to Camp for a week

1 child \$175 \$ \$ _____

2 children \$350 \$ \$ _____

3 children \$525 \$ \$ _____

Charter Membership (includes life membership) \$1000 \$ _____

Family/Individual Annual Membership \$25 \$ _____

Organization Membership \$50 \$ _____

Other Donation \$ _____

Total Donation \$ _____

Please make your cheque payable to
GICEL
P.O. Box 496
Salt Spring Island, BC
V8K 2W1