



Spring 2013

GICEL

Over ten years of bringing nature experiences to all

<http://www.gicel.ca>

Reconnecting with Nature

Desmond Berghofer PhD

I have reported before in this Newsletter about the work of Richard Louv and his concept of “nature-deficit disorder.” He wrote about this in his 2008 book *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*. He cites research that shows the benefits of children being connected to nature and encourages parents to become familiar with this research so that we may see a movement towards “nature-child reunion” rather than “nature-deficit disorder.” Sadly, the indicators are that things currently are going in the wrong direction as “the first de-natured generation” is coming out of our schools and colleges. Louv

argues that the health of Earth is at stake as well. “How the young respond to nature, and how they raise their own children, will shape the configurations of our cities and homes—our daily lives.”

One important part of reconnecting with nature requires a shift of focus in education toward ecological values at least as comparable as values for the humanities and sciences. In fact, the school curriculum needs to be re-oriented so that the human presence on Earth with all of our wonderful cultural and scientific achievements (as well as our failures) is understood in terms of our required role to be stewards.





In our work at GICEL we understand this clearly. As well as running our own Summer Earth Education Programs, we support initiatives to reform mainstream education in this direction. We encourage all of our supporters to add your voices so that political and educational leaders get the message.

Richard Louv offers more support to his argument in his latest book published in 2011, *The Nature Principle: Reconnecting with Life in a Virtual Age*. The Nature Principle “holds that a reconnection to the natural world is fundamental to human health, well-being, spirit, and survival.” It’s about conservation, but also about restoration—“about creating new natural habitats where they once were or never were, in our homes, workplaces, schools, neighbourhoods, cities, suburbs and farms. It’s about the power of living in nature—not *with* it, but *in* it.” It’s also about restoring native plants to our suburban ecosystems so that our native insect populations can flourish on the plants they are biologically adapted to. This surely is an enterprise in which parents, grandparents and their young ones can work together in fostering the human-nature connection. If you are inspired to do this, contact us at gicel@gicel.ca and we can give you some information.

Humanity in the 21st century could have no greater objective than seeking to understand how we are part of the great connected whole

and designing our lives and work to fit within its embrace. As Richard Louv says: “*We can truly care for nature and ourselves only if we see ourselves and nature as inseparable, only if we believe that human beings have a right to the gift of nature, undestroyed.*”

Report from Board Chair

For Year January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2012

In 2012 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, 2012 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), Catherine McEwen, and Steve Dunsmuir.

Board Meetings

Meetings of the Board were held on January 27, 2012, April 27, 2012, September 28, 2012.

The AGM was held on April 27, 2012.

Desmond Berghofer PhD
chair



Summer Earth Education Program 2012

by Michael Dunn

GICEL 2012 was successful not only in numbers but more importantly, in the impact and engagement the program provides for kids in an ever-increasing age range. This year also saw a general increase in level of donor support for the program as a whole and most importantly we had a 31% increase in participants over the 2011 program year.

The summer started out with a three-day 'Youth Leadership Training Program' camping trip on Mayne Island. We had 13 leaders and volunteers from Salt Spring, Mayne and Pender islands who came together with the goal of developing our effective leadership and communication skills while building ecological appreciation and knowledge. The camp started with a downpour of rain,

providing our leaders with the opportunity to learn how to quickly make tarp shelters and the importance of packing good wool socks. The program was action packed; leaders built their own tarp tents, learned about edible plants, did a marine walk with Michael Dunn, a night orienteering course with glow sticks, told tales around the campfire and did a stunning hike to Vulture Ridge with a geocache find to top it off! Leaders came prepared with their own game or activity to lead the group in and receive feedback from their peers on communication and leadership. The highlight for the kids was the many hours of Mission Impossible at dusk, which found kids and leaders working together, crawling through mud and hiding in bushes to get to their destinations. In the end the group had come together with a stronger sense of community, stronger understanding of their





environment, and a higher level of confidence in their roles and abilities that they bring to our summer programs.

This year 210 participants in our Summer Earth Education programs (SEEP) were steeped in the wonders, diversity and stories of our home place in the Southern Gulf Islands. The program continues to use parts 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. Each of the island programs has its weekly themes, enabling leaders to provide hands-on, explorative rotations centered on various elements of ecology. On top of that, each day is filled with ‘clan’ time for fort building and team challenges promoting cooperation and collaborative problem solving. GICEL encourages kids to explore, get dirty, challenge themselves while developing a love for being

outdoors.

Themes such as Homes and Hideaways, Marine ecosystems, Forest Ecosystems, Powerful People, and Growing Food provided participants with hands-on experience on 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, flying fish kites, divers bringing in deep water organisms and simulated oil spill cleanup.

Environmental Leaders Apprenticeship Program

The jewel of our 2012 programs was the launch of our Environmental Leaders Apprenticeship

Program on Cortes Island. This year was our pilot and we had 9 teens ranging from 13 to 17 years old attend the one-week program on Linnaea Farm. The students were from the Salt Spring, Victoria, Cortes and Read islands. The whole theme for the week was to have each participant and leader push themselves outside of their comfort zones to gain confidence in their leadership style and be able to communicate clearly to others. The participants and leaders jelled as a team and deeply explored cooperative challenges, workshopped on what makes a leader, prepared meals, explored the night and created many opportunities for interactive sharing and feedback. Each apprentice leader was given the personal challenge of leading the group through something that they considered themselves good at. The result was the group being led through sessions on origami, gumboot dancing, yoga on the beach, games, ecology and history of Cortes Island to name a few. The highlight for all was the overnight trip to Marina Island where the young leaders were challenged to make their own shelters using tarps. The first evening a pod of Orcas swam into the bay adjoining the campground while in the morning the group was serenaded by a resident pack of wolves communicating with another pack on Cortes Island. Feedback from the young leaders was that this was a life experience for them.

An early December leaders' retreat confirmed that the leaders apprenticeship program and our approach to leadership was a success and it was resolved to continue the program into the future.

The 2012 SEEP program ran for a total of 7 weeks: 2 weeks on Mayne Island; 3 weeks on Salt Spring Island;

2 weeks on Pender Island; 1 week on Cortes Island; and, 1 week on Saturna Island. In 2012, our summer programs were able to provide part-time summer employment for a total of 11 adults and 12 young people within the island communities where GICEL operates.

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 \$10,000 for this purpose. We are particularly grateful to the Barraclough Foundation and the Friends of Cortes Island (FOCI) for their financial assistance to help launch our pilot Environmental Leaders Apprenticeship Program. 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.

NEW PROGRAM!

Early Learners Summer Earth Education Program - Seedlings





Late in 2012, GICEL's Program Director, Michael Dunn had discussions with others about the possibility of tailoring an SEEP program for early learners (ages 3-5 years old). This idea had come up over the last several years from parents and grandparents who had children in our summer programs, but that keen younger siblings had to wait till they were 6 to attend. As a result and with the interest of an early learners teacher, GICEL will launch its SEEP early learners

Pilot Program, July 22-26, 2013 on Mayne Island. It is called our Seedlings Program.

The program emphasis will be on creative preschool fun, learning to be at home together in nature, developing stronger connections with nature. There will be lots of time for playing, making art, story telling, and nature-based explorations.

Summer 2013 is the launch of this new program, please monitor our website for updates (www.gicel.ca).

2013 SEEP Dates

Salt Spring Island

July 8 to July 26, 2013 (not including weekends).
Contact: Andrew McPhee (amcphee@sd64.bc.ca).

Pender Island

July 22 to 26, 2013. Contact: Andrea Mills (amills@sd64.bc.ca) - Garden Program
August 19 to 23, 2013. Contact: Andrea Mills (amills@sd64.bc.ca)

Mayne Island

NEW PROGRAM! July 22 to 26, 2013.
Seedlings Program (3-5 year olds). Contact: Tina Farmilo (tinafarmilo@shaw.ca)
July 29 to August 2, 2013. Contact: Jessica Willows (jwillows@sd64.bc.ca). Forest Program
August 5 to 9, 2013. Contact: Jessica Willows (jwillows@sd64.bc.ca). Marine Program

Cortes Island

August 11 to 17, 2013. Environmental Leaders Apprenticeship Program. Contact: Andrew McPhee (amcphee@sd64.bc.ca).

Saturna Island

August 19 to 23, 2013. Contact: Jessica Willows (jwillows@sd64.bc.ca).



Pender
Garden SEEP

Saturna Ecological Education Centre (SEEC)

by Natalie Dunsmuir (student)

“The Saturna Ecological Education Centre (SEEC) is a place-based public high school program modeled on the ideals of GICEL. 12 students per semester join us from all over southwestern British Columbia (and beyond) to live and learn together in our off-the-grid cabins at Haggis Hollow on beautiful Saturna Island. The students explore 5 integrated courses with an ecology focus, earning credits for English, Physical Education, Biology, Teaching & Learning and an Independent Directed Studies course of their own design which they explore with a local community mentor. More information can be found at see64.ca. “



This semester has already been busy and exciting at Saturna Ecological Education Center (SEEC). Our class consists of fifteen students rather than the usual twelve, adding a few more levels and perspectives to our discussions and experiences. We have students from places all around BC; Saturna Island, Lillooet and Vancouver being just a few of them. This, as you can perhaps imagine, makes for an adventurous time at SEEC as we all learn to get along and work together.

We started out this semester by participating in twelve group building challenges known as the “Dirty Dozen”. We worked together to climb over an “electric fence”, to move an egg around on a net of strings and to cram as many people as possible into one tiny outhouse. All in all the activities were a great way to start out our time together and helped to build good relationships as classmates. They really inspired an atmosphere of acceptance and group spirit, setting us up for the rest of the year.

In addition to stuffing ourselves into a grimy outhouse we also started the year off by going on a two day backpacking trip to a beach on Saturna called Taylor Point. While it wasn’t as adventurous as last semester’s week long ordeal along the Juan De Fuca trail it was still an amazing excursion. We had a fire on the beach to cook with and a lot of us sat by it to tell stories. It was a beautiful night and we were lucky with the weather. Three other girls and I made a raft out of a large piece of styrofoam and sailed around trying not to fall into the freezing water.

We cooked our own meals and made our own shelters out of the supplies we had carried on our backs. I must admit, those tarps were heavy. Carrying the biggest one was like having a hippopotamus strapped to your back as you climbed Mount Everest. But it was worth it. The girl’s shelter was a work of art. A mastery so beautiful that we didn’t even get wet.

This semester we have also had a number of guest speakers visit us to teach us what they know. We went on a trip out to East Point to do a workshop on photography and marine biology that ended with us walking the marvelous

sandstone beaches as we studied tide pools and the critters that live in them. I got the chance to put my camera to work and managed to capture a few pictures that I deemed worthwhile. It was a fun and educational experience and I hope to have the chance to meet many more talented and willing community members. Meeting the people of the island and having them share their passions with me is a really powerful learning experience and I enjoy these outings and adventures.

We have also had a lady come to our school in the evening to teach us about meditation. She led us through the process of a certain type of meditation and set down a foundation we could come back to if ever we craved silence and calm. This activity is particularly useful for our hectic and busy school lives. Sometimes a little quiet is the best thing in the world.

Another thing I have been enjoying this semester is our English class. We've had some really powerful discussions about the important things in life and it is truly an amazing experience to be able to openly share our thoughts, opinions, beliefs and memories. By the end of our first really good discussion one of the watching adults was in tears.

The people in our class have had so many different experiences throughout their lives that we never seem to run out of relevant stories to share. The best part is that I feel I can share things without there being anger or scorn directed at my opinions. Often in life it isn't possible to talk about the things that really matter to us without someone disagreeing in a violent manner. Here when people disagree it adds depth to our discussions, rather than taking it away. We are all open and mature enough to keep our English classes positive.

One of the courses we have done the most in this semester is definitely our teaching and learning course. The grade tens are taking Personal Planning instead but we have been largely working as a group, with the understanding that learning to teach and learning how we learn is very important in later life and in our development as a human being. We have been working with the younger buddies from the elementary school and have also each taught two different lessons to our peers. The goal for our first lesson was to simply teach the class something that we had a passion for and something that we ourselves knew a lot about. It was an interesting and challenging experience for a lot of us as we attempted to get the hang of teaching.

As you can probably tell it has been a very hectic and awesome semester so far. I am looking forward to all the new and upcoming adventures I will get to take part in and to all the things I will learn. In the next few months we will be leading our first groups through various activities, going to an Ocean and Science Symposium and taking a road trip through British Columbia on our bus. There's so much still to do and life isn't about to stop being busy. No one can say there's such a thing as a typical day at SEEC!





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 \$200 \$ \$ _____

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3 children \$600 \$ \$ _____

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Organization Membership \$50 \$ _____

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Total Donation \$ _____

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