

State of the World

One of the services I subscribe to is the Library of the Worldwatch Institute in Washington DC. Its premier publication each year is the current State of the World report. I wish I could say this was encouraging reading. Inevitably it is not so, as year after year it documents how far humanity is falling behind in its race with sustainability. The current 2006 report is particularly worrisome as it focuses on the emergence of China and India as new super economic powers in the world at the same time as we are realizing that the pressures from the already industrialized nations are putting unsustainable pressures on the ecosystems of the planet. The report makes the sobering observation that if the per capita claims of China and India on the biosphere were to match those of Europe, not to mention the USA (which is higher), “we would need a full planet Earth to sustain these two countries.” Obviously this is not going to happen, so we are left wondering where the leadership and wisdom is going to come from to avert disaster.

At the other end of the spectrum I also subscribe to a magazine from the United Kingdom called “Positive News,” which also puts out a publication called “Living Lightly on the Earth.” These are much more enjoyable reading, for they document activities going on all over the world where people are choosing to act in ways that are supportive of long term sustainability. Many of these have to do with efforts by children and teachers to show the benefits of living in harmony with the natural world, whether it be by creating retreat centres, cultivating school vegetable gardens, or demonstrating the feasibility of alternative energy sources and building materials.

Somewhere between the small scale but numerous good news efforts of ordinary people to live sustainably and the large scale industrialization thrusts of powerful economic forces lies the future of the world. In peaceful democratic countries like Canada we have the opportunity and the freedom to learn what we need to know and do what we need to do to increase the odds for a favourable future for the generations that follow us. But it will not come without dedicated effort and a determination to exercise responsibility for the way we live.

That is the heart of what The Gulf Islands Centre for Ecological Learning is about. We are clearly in the camp of the “Positive News” people, but we live in the world of geo-politics and globalization. We must find our voice and marshal our commitment to the necessity of ecological learning. In the midst of each small initiative we must not lose sight of the larger objective: to use the advantages and privileges we have to become a model of how to live lightly on the Earth so that we along with the billions of others who share the planet with us, and the generations who follow us, can have a chance to live well and sustainably.

We do not claim we have all the answers, but we know we are part of the solution. We look forward to working with our members and partners to expand our programs, to increase our efforts and to reach out to the world with positive news.

*Desmond Berghofer PhD
Chair*

**GULF ISLANDS CENTRE FOR
ECOLOGICAL LEARNING
REPORT OF YEAR
JUNE 1, 2005 TO DECEMBER 31,
2005**

This is a shorter year report because of the passed resolution of the board to change the Gulf Islands Centre for Ecological Learning reporting year to a calendar year. During this period GICEL expanded its program offerings, worked toward its residential program products, got its financial infrastructure in place and launched exciting new programs within its operating area. This report highlights the accomplishments of a dedicated group of volunteers who have contributed so much of their time to move the GICEL vision forward.

Print Communications

Over the reporting year, several print communications were developed with respect to the posters and advertising for the Seasonal Earth Education Programs on each of the participating islands. A start was made on developing the residential program brochure with advice from the Vancouver School Board staff through Desmond Berghoffer. The GICEL website continues to be improved and evolve and it was effectively used for promoting and registering participants in our summer programs. Judy Raddysh continues to provide her services as webmaster and this is very much appreciated.

Programs

Significant strides have been made in the development and offering of the GICEL programs within the Gulf Island

communities. Seasonal Earth Education Programs were held on Mayne, Pender and Salt Spring islands in this reporting year. We were very excited to be holding our first summer programs offerings on Pender Island. All were fully subscribed representing 106 participants of these 2 week programs. The feedback received reflected the quality of the activities and the leadership teams that were hired to deliver them. This reporting period, we were able to hold a week-long session for mid teens on Salt Spring Island which included an overnight camping stay.



Day programs continued through this reporting period with a comprehensive program developed for Pender Island geared to the Fridays when school is not in session. All kids between ages 6-12 were invited to join the Friday nature club starting Oct. 29. This club was designed for adventurers interested in exploring many fascinating ecosystems and creatures on Pender Island. The program also included games to play and crafts to make. The themes were : Insect Extravaganza; Mushroom Madness; Salmon, Eagles and Invertebrates; and, Birds. Over the course of these four offerings, there were 28 participants. Thanks to Christy Neufeld for developing and running these programs.

In partnership with Parks Canada and the Mayne Island Conservancy, GICEL sponsored two community broom removal events within the Gulf Islands National Park Reserve on Mayne Island. The result was the complete removal of invasives; the restoration of the area cleared is in the planning. Promotion of our 3 night/ 4 day residential programs at the Haven of Hope on Pender Island were being developed at the end of this reporting period.

Over the reporting period our summer programs and Friday programs generated \$15, 640 in revenues through fees.



Facilities/Sites

Burgoyne Bay, Salt Spring Island

GICEL held its first summer programs in the new provincial park lands and in doing so had to apply for a Park Use Permit. This was accomplished with some conditions of our use. As well, GICEL was identified clearly as one of the stakeholder groups with interest in a longer term presence within the park. At the end of this reporting period, the process to develop the park use management plan had not begun.

Mayne Island

The Mayne Island Summer Earth Education Program used the lands and facilities within the Gulf Islands National Park Reserve on Mayne Island. This included the use of the “research house” and grounds during the day. Since these programs were held, discussions with Parks Canada have ensued to formalize the use of the research house for GICEL programs and the use and renovation of the barn as GICEL facility. Meetings with Parks Canada staff developed a general agreement whereby GICEL could have access to the research house for summer program use and that the barn could be used and renovated, if desirable, for full time GICEL use. At the close of this reporting year, Parks Canada had approved our use of the research house for this year and the barn was sanitized and approved for our use during the summer programs.

Salt Spring Island

The relationship with the Fulford Community Nature School developed more fully over the reporting year. The full two-week program was centred out of the school.

Thanks to Judy Raddysh and Sarah Myers for their work on this very successful program.

Fundraising

Over this reporting year, the GICEL summer programs have been very successful in raising external funds from local community organizations. There is strong support for the programs. All programs were able to cover most of their costs through fees and these community grants.

An application to the Barraclough Foundation was successful in providing funds to acquire extra equipment for various islands programs and to assist in promotional material development. The Pender Island GICEL group were successful in applying for and receiving a Legacies 2010 – Arts Now grant which assisted in paying of staff and subsidizing some of the registrant families. Thanks to Jessica Willows and Christy Neufeld for this. Again GICEL was successful in receiving Capital Regional District Grants-in-Aid to be applied to its programs on Mayne, Pender and Salt Spring islands.

Funding applications were completed to several island-based community organizations to help with 2005 summer programs on Mayne, Pender and Salt Spring islands.

We had one new Charter membership over this reporting year and two grants as a result of fundraising events. One hosted by Maple Leaf Charters on Salt Spring Island and the other the result of a community dance held on Mayne Island.

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| Grants | \$15,835 |
| Memberships | \$ 500 |

GICEL Promotion

Over the reporting year, GICEL was promoted by members of the Board and staff at various venues and opportunities which included Salt Spring Maple Leaf Tours event, Mayne Island Fall Fair, UVIC Institute for Global Arts, Pender Island Fall Fair, and Mayne Island Agricultural Society.

New Partnerships

Over the reporting year, GICEL has established one additional working relationship with BC Parks. Steve Dunsmuir, the new principal of Saturna School, is doing a masters dissertation on the “GICEL Way” and GICEL has a signed an agreement with him to act as a thesis sponsor.

