

Greetings

We are pleased to greet readers to the Spring 2007 Issue of the GICEL Newsletter. For those who may not be familiar with our work, we would like you to know that GICEL is the **Gulf Islands Centre for Ecological Learning**. We have been active for several years on the southern Gulf Islands as a non-profit organization providing nature-based learning programs for children from very young ages through to youth as well as for adults who want to deepen their understanding about how we must learn to live in balance with the natural world.

Our summer programs have been very successful and are reaching a wider audience every year. Programs are now being offered on Salt Spring Island, Mayne Island, Pender Island and Saturna Island. Information and schedules for the programs for summer 2007 are on our website at www.gicel.ca. In the Newsletter you can read about the 2006 programs as well as find information on our work with several partners, including the Gulf Islands School District and the new Saturna Ecological Education Center (SEEC).

Our valuable contribution to ecological learning depends on the generosity, expertise and energy of volunteers as well as financial support from members and friends. Information about membership can be found on page 6 of the Newsletter.

Thank you for your interest. For further information, please see our website at www.gicel.ca.

An Idea Whose Time Has Come

The winter of 2006-2007 registered an amazing transformation in political thinking in our country. From being at best a background thought in the minds of the electorate, concern about the state of the natural environment suddenly surged to the forefront of public awareness.



It's not that one day there was something different about conditions in the world from the day before. It's that people all at once began to pay attention to something that was there all the time. What we perceive we believe, and suddenly a lot of people began to perceive that things are not right with the world of nature.

The triggering issue was global warming. Many scientists and environmentalists had been warning for years that we have entered a dangerous time when rising global temperatures are threatening the livability of the planet in only a few more decades. But this was

not a concern at the forefront of public consciousness. Intergovernmental negotiators had stitched together an agreement called the Kyoto Accord to limit greenhouse gas emissions that were believed to be contributing to global warming, but Canadian governments had done very little to address the targets or spirit of that agreement. In fact, greenhouse gas emissions in Canada have been steadily rising. And the Canadian people were not pressing their governments on the issue. We held a federal election only twelve months ago in which concern about the environment did not make it into any part of the mainstream election platforms.



But suddenly one year later all that has changed, hopefully to the benefit of the Earth and all life on it. In British Columbia in the recent throne speech opening the current session of the Legislature the government put forward an environmental agenda that literally left longtime environmentalists gasping at the breadth and depth of what seemed to be new understanding and commitment to the need for change in policy making about the way that human society relates to the natural world.

All this gives great encouragement to the work and mission of GICEL. As a centre for ecological learning we know

there is no quick or easy solution to the problems that scientists and governments are now agreeing must be addressed. But with greater public awareness and substantive political acknowledgement of the need for action, we can now move ahead with our work with greater confidence and optimism. We should applaud the change we have witnessed in recent months and step forward in every way we can to encourage those in positions of power and influence to take leadership for ecological learning.

Learning, of course, is the issue. Nothing of significance changed in the conditions of the environment in our part of the world between the fall of 2006 and the spring of 2007. It is true we had a wild wet winter, but that could be dismissed as an anomaly if there was no shift in learning. But there has been a shift. Something in the collective consciousness of people has changed. We must now move vigorously to capitalize on that change. GICEL already has a solid reputation for the quality of its summer programs. We must capitalize on that and reach out to new partners who can help us extend our influence. There is nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come, and the idea has now come that we must build our human societies in harmony with the ecology of the natural world. GICEL has much to offer in putting that idea into practice, and we look forward to strengthening our contribution.

Desmond Berghofer
Chair

Report from Board Chair

For Year January 1, 2006
– December 31, 2006

GICEL had another productive year in 2006 as it expanded its key work in delivering summer programs in ecological learning while continuing to establish itself as an emerging institution of importance in the Gulf Islands. Through key fundraising and promotional activities and consolidation of important partnerships we prepared the way for further growth and development in 2007.

Board Membership

During the year, the Board received with regret the following resignations: Wendy Herbert due to her retirement as Superintendent of Schools for SD #64; Judy Raddysh due to her appointment as Secondary School Principal and the added responsibilities that go along with that; and Caterina Geuer due to her new duties at Royal Roads University. The Board was pleased to appoint Michael Dunn as a Director responsible for programming, replacing his former responsibilities as Executive Director. We were also pleased to welcome Shelly Johnson back as a Board member and to appoint Steve Dunsmuir to the Board.

At year end the Board of Directors was as follows: Desmond Berghofer (Chair), Mike Hoebel (Vice-Chair), Kathy Tamashiro (Treasurer), Michael Dunn (Programs), Steve Dunsmuir (Acting Recording Secretary) and Shelly Johnson. The Board decided at its meeting on December 8, 2006 that Board meetings will be held quarterly.

Website

For most of the year Judy Raddysh developed and maintained the GICEL

website. On her resignation she agreed to maintain the website, but any major development would require special consideration. The issue of how best to maintain the website in a dynamic format is under active consideration by the Board.

Residential Programming

During the early part of the year, Desmond Berghofer ascertained real interest in the Vancouver School District in sending students to a GICEL residential program. However, because of emerging opportunities, GICEL decided not to pursue using the site originally envisaged for this on Pender Island, thus no programs were offered in 2006.



Advisory Council

Consideration was given to establishing an Advisory Council and Caterina Geuer undertook basic developmental work. However, because of changes during the year in GICEL's developmental path the Board decided to hold off on creating an Advisory Council.

Steve Dunsmuir's Project on GICEL

The Board was pleased to participate in Steve Dunsmuir's project on GICEL as part of his Master's thesis for Royal Roads University. The Board received the completed project entitled

“Framework for the Future.” It was clear from the report that the GICEL program intersects with many of the learning outcomes intended in the BC school curriculum.



General Fundraising

A major fundraising event for GICEL was held in April 2006 on Mayne Island at the home of Helen and John O’Brian. Fifteen people attended as well as several Board members. We received good feedback on the remarks and presentation by Desmond Berghofer and Michael Dunn. The event raised \$8500 and established good recognition for GICEL on Mayne Island. The Board sees this as a good model for further fundraising on other Gulf Islands and preliminary work has been undertaken on that with a priority set for Salt Spring Island.

GICEL Promotion

Michael Dunn promoted GICEL on Saturna Island at the annual Lamb BBQ on July 1, 2006 for which Desmond Berghofer had a new GICEL banner prepared, which is now available for

other promotions. Mike Hoebel made contact with various professional development associations for BC teachers. Michael Dunn is actively promoting GICEL in various ways. The Board supported the development of a GICEL promotion by Ekos TV and a product is now available in several forms for promotional purposes.

Burgoyne Bay Site

The Board recognizes the generous work of Michael Dunn in securing a five-year permit for operating on the GICEL site at Burgoyne Bay on Salt Spring Island.

GICEL Membership

The Board decided to maintain GICEL membership fees unchanged for 2006. Two Charter Memberships were offered to Helen and John O’Brian on Mayne Island for their support and contributions to GICEL.

Adult Programming

The Board reaffirmed its support in principle for adult programming with an emphasis on practical sustainability.

Saturna Ecological Education Center

Steve Dunsmuir briefed the Board on the proposed development of the Saturna Ecological Education Center on Saturna Island. At year end the Board looked forward to what this new development might mean for GICEL’s work in the future.

Conclusion

At the end of three and a half years of operation GICEL is firmly established on several Gulf Islands as a centre for ecological learning. Our summer programs are enthusiastically received and are steadily expanding in numbers and scope. We have not been as successful as we would have wished in developing residential and adult

programs, but with the possibility of a new partnership with the Saturna Ecological Education Center we look forward to future development of the GICEL vision in 2007. Thanks to our successful fundraising efforts and careful management of resources we have ended the 2006 year in a secure financial situation.

Summer Earth Education Programs 2006

This year we held Summer Earth Education Programs on four of the southern Gulf Islands – Salt Spring Island July 17th to 27th, Mayne Island July 24th to August 4th, Pender Island August 14th to 18th and Saturna Island August 21st to 25th for a total of six weeks of programs. In all we had 121 placements filled for these programs. 2006 was the first year for offering programs on Saturna Island. Of note, particularly for Mayne Island participants, is that this is the first year that the program attracted more children from elsewhere than from the island. These visiting children are connected to the island through family and many now are planning their visits to coincide with the GICEL programs. Also of note, is that GICEL successfully negotiated a 5 year Park Use Permit for Burgoyne Bay Provincial Park to use for its Salt Spring Island programs.

Special Programs

As a result of the production of our DVD, Royal Roads University is offering a continuing education course on eco-literacy, which will be co-led by Rick Searle ekosTV and GICEL. GICEL will be delivering the hands-on portion of the program on Mayne Island in June 2007. Check out Royal Roads Continuing Studies on line if you are

interested

continuingstudies@royalroads.ca.

Employment

This year GICEL was successful in receiving a federal Career Opportunity Summer Employment Program grant to hire one student helper for 6 weeks. We were able to offer this to a Mayne Island student who helped organize our equipment and files as well as, assist in the running of our programs on Mayne, Pender and Saturna islands. Our GICEL vision to provide employment for young people living on the Gulf Islands is being achieved in that we have been able to provide part-time paid seasonal employment or honoraria to up to 18 young people for the four island programs.

Summer Earth Education Programs 2007

Please check out our website for dates of our programs for this coming summer. www.gicel.ca.

Update: Saturna Ecological Education Centre: SEEC

The staff, students and volunteers of the Saturna Ecological Education Centre (SEEC) are excited to announce the creation of two dynamic, nature-based ecological learning programs for students in kindergarten to grade 12.

After many months of planning, curriculum design and foundational development, SEEC has received the whole-hearted support of our two key partners, School District #64 (Gulf Islands) and the Gulf Islands Centre for Ecological Learning, and will begin to offer environmental place-based learning experiences this coming September.

What began as an optimistic vision for the future of Saturna Island School and

the development of ecologically literate and responsible citizens has begun to take shape at a time of unprecedented concern about the future health of our planet.



This spring, we expect a commitment from a number of Gulf Islands Secondary School high school students to register for the upcoming fall semester at Saturna Island School. This inaugural cohort will explore and give life to SEEC's first ever Environmental Studies program, a groundbreaking educational opportunity featuring the powerful and unique integration of Biology 11 and English 11, with our own locally developed courses entitled "Teaching & Learning: Beyond the Classroom", and "Community Connections: Independent Directed Studies." Besides doubling the current population of our school, this place-based and constructivist program is designed to blur the lines between school and community, so that both are one and the same. Saturna will become our classroom, and its people and the natural world our teachers, as SEEC learners explore, enrich and add diversity to our island.

Our second unique and exciting program, "Elementary Eco-Adventures" will engage students from kindergarten to grade seven in a variety of environmental education activities that

promote "Feeling, Knowing & Doing" *in, about and for* the natural world. Gulf Islands' teachers have been invited to bring their classes to our island for hands-on/minds-on nature-based learning experiences ranging from day trips to eco-immersions of up to three nights and four days in length. Our plan is to expand this invitation to school districts beyond the Gulf Islands once our programs and facilities have been proven and improved.

You can find out much more about the Saturna Ecological Education Centre by visiting our website at www.seec64.ca!

2007 Memberships are now due

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

- Family/individual \$25/year
- Organisation \$50/year
- Charter Membership \$1000
(includes life membership)

I would like to renew my GICEL membership and continue to support its vision of providing ecological education in the Gulf Islands

Amount enclosed: _____

Signature _____

Please mail your cheque or money order to

GICEL P.O. Box 496
Salt Spring Island, BC
V8K 2W1