



Spring 2011

GICEL

Over ten years of bringing nature experiences to all

<http://www.gicel.ca>

Nature Deficit Disorder

GICEL has a new revamped website, which is described elsewhere in this Newsletter by Vice-Chair, Mike Hoebel, who has taken the lead in its design and maintenance. I hope you will visit it at www.gicel.ca. When you do, you will find in the “news” section a report of an interview with one of GICEL’s distinguished supporters and Gulf Islands’ resident, Robert Bateman. In this interview Mr. Bateman makes many important and insightful comments about a growing phenomenon in our modern, urbanized and technologically obsessed society. The condition was named “nature deficit disorder” by well known author and environmentalist Richard Louv in *Last Child in the Woods*, in which he describes various behavioural problems among young people who have little experience in interacting with the natural world.

Mr. Bateman rightly asserts that the problem goes much deeper than behavioural problems, for we are in danger of creating a society in which parents who grow up in ignorance of our place in nature are unable to teach their children what they never knew themselves. “This technologically obsessed environment for young people is a juggernaut rolling over an entire generation,” said Mr. Bateman.

At GICEL we know only too well the seriousness of this problem, and all of our work is devoted to addressing it. You will read in this Newsletter about our Summer Earth Education Programs, which we have been offering for ten years to children, using the diverse ecological environments of several Gulf Islands. In 2010 we recorded the 1000th registration in these programs. This is an important achievement, but we know that we are limited in the number of children we can





teach directly, so in the past year we sponsored workshops led by GICEL Board members Michael Dunn and Catherine McEwen, to show classroom teachers how they can utilize the natural environment around their schools to teach important lessons to young children about how we need to live with nature.

Robert Bateman has pointed out the importance of early experiences in growing up with nature in the formative years of childhood. None of the spectacular experiences with nature in his later life was “any more enchanting than the nature I discovered as a young boy in the ravine below our backyard [in Toronto].” As a farm boy who grew up on the Darling Downs in Queensland, Australia, I, too, can attest to the magic of spending a lot of one’s childhood in the outdoors—a far more potent magic, I would assert, than any to be found in the Harry Potter series of books and films.

We thank all of our supporters and friends for helping us utilize the unique endowments of the Gulf Islands to address “nature deficit disorder” among the children who have the good fortune to find their way to our programs. We are enormously advantaged in what we do by our close association with the Gulf Islands School District, and I would like to publicly acknowledge that. I encourage all readers of this Newsletter to pass it on to others, so that our work becomes more widely known. I ask all readers to join us as members or renew their membership in GICEL by going to www.gicel.ca and downloading the membership form, or by contacting us directly at xicel@xicel.ca. All donations to GICEL are tax deductible and go directly to supporting our programs.

*Desmond Berghofer PhD
Chair*

Report from Board Chair

For Year January 1, 2010 – December 31, 2010

In 2010 the Board continued to oversee the offering of GICEL's Summer Earth Education Programs and other activities. A report on the summer programs is found elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Board Membership

Russ Searle resigned as a Board member in 2010. We thank him for his contribution. At year end the Board of Directors was as follows: Desmond Berghofer (Chair), Mike Hoebel (Vice-Chair), Jeff Hopkins (Recording Secretary), Shelly Johnson (Treasurer), Michael Dunn (Programs), Catherine McEwen and Steve Dunsmuir.

Board Meetings

The Board held regular meetings on February 5, April 9, June 25, October 1 and November 26. The AGM was held on April 9.

Website

A major step forward was taken on the development of the GICEL website in 2010 under the leadership of Vice-Chair Mike Hoebel who worked with John Cameron to design the new site. A report on the website is found elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Mini Bus

Discussions were ongoing throughout the year concerning GICEL's use of a mini bus owned by the Gulf Islands School District. This would also provide the opportunity for GICEL to advertise using a decal on the side of the bus.

GICEL 10 Year Celebration

A committee of the Board chaired by Michael Dunn did extensive planning

for a celebration of GICEL's 10 years of work. This planning is ongoing.

New GICEL Headquarters at Georgina Point Lighthouse

Negotiations were ongoing throughout 2010 between GICEL and Parks Canada for the use by GICEL of the former residence at the Georgina Point Lighthouse as GICEL offices. GICEL is using the space while a permanent Licence of Occupation is negotiated.

Professional Development Workshops

GICEL hosted three very successful professional development workshops for teachers on April 23 and October 16. Thanks to Board members Michael Dunn and Catherine McEwen for their work on this.

Grant Opportunities

In 2010 Board Member Jeff Hopkins led discussions with First Nations representatives for possible co-application for grant funds. This work is ongoing.

These were the major activities of the GICEL Board in 2010.

Desmond Berghofer PhD
Chair



Summer Earth Education Program 2010

Grouped in clans such as the *Roaring Rockhoppers* or the *Tree Clan*, participants in our Summer Earth Education programs (SEEP) explored together, studied 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 2010 programs. The clans created their identity and built forts which were their base of operations for the week-long programs. Using rotations and activity centres, participants had hands-on experience in understanding forest ecosystem dynamics, multi-sensory explorations, bird communities, food chains and food pyramids, animal behaviour, energy flows in ecosystems, journaling and self reflection. Specifically designed games to re-enforce the concepts and activities had children role playing as prey, predators, salmon, and orcas to name a few.

Specific studies were done on forest decomposition and the soil cycle, intertidal

zonation and freshwater aquatic organisms' lifecycles. Each island program included sessions led by specialists in certain fields including forest bird communities, forage fish ecology, watershed dynamics and salmon survival, as well as, First Nations storytelling and use of resources. Participants also spent time collecting, identifying and recording various organisms found within forest, freshwater and marine ecosystems according to their place in the food chain.

Music was an integral part of each day's opening and closing ceremonies in which the participants learned new songs about the natural world around them. At the end of the week's program, individualized certificates of achievement were presented to each participant at our closing ceremony.

The summer 2010 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. The 1000th registrant in the program was surpassed on Mayne Island in early August. Total





enrollment for the summer program was 159 participants, which was an increase of 8% over the previous years enrollments.

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 just over \$6,000 for this purpose.

Teacher Professional Development workshops

2010 was GICEL's launch of its Ecoliteracy 101 workshops. These sessions were held for the teachers of the Gulf Island School District as professional development opportunities. They were designed to assist in the use of the **constructivist** learning model being implemented by the Gulf Islands School

District. The other purpose was to remove thresholds that tend to prevent teachers from taking their classes outside. First and foremost, was demonstrating activities that could be undertaken in school grounds or the local neighbourhood to remove the notion that these could only be done using field trips. Three formal sessions were held – one in April, one in September and the other in October 2010.

GICEL Directors Cate McEwen and Michael Dunn facilitated the April session hosted by the Fulford Community School. This workshop was an exciting opportunity for primary and elementary teachers to explore ways to create learning experiences across all subject areas using the natural environment. The course had both indoor and outdoor components.

The outcomes from this workshop session provided participants with some basic tools for integrating nature-based learning into their lesson plans. They were challenged to take what they had learned and create a proposal for using nature to deliver a course theme.

The September workshop was facilitated by Cate McEwen at the Fulford Community School. This was a follow up session from the April workshop specifically for Fulford staff. Cate guided participants through a forest program using components of the Globe Science Program.

The October workshop, held at the Salt Spring Elementary School, was facilitated by Michael Dunn and Briony Penn and its purpose was to provide participants with a selection of nature-based, outdoor activities that could be used to demonstrate ecological themes, build foundational skills in innovative ways and to

create options for exploring home place. As such, the facilitators demonstrated activities that were place-based, ecological, and outdoor focused.

All workshops were open and interactive sessions whereby facilitators pointed out how each of the activities or components of activities can serve as a basis for a learning plan or a measure of a learning outcome.

The afternoon sessions, in the workshops, were for the participants to use the results of the morning hands-on sessions to discuss or design relevant activities or programs for their own classrooms. This was an open session with the facilitators acting as resource people. The participants organized themselves into either small groups or individually for this purpose. Extensive resource and reference materials were made available. At the end of the day, participants described what they had





created or planned to create for their classes. These proposals were recorded and shared with participants after the workshop.

The workshops attracted 26 teachers and education assistants from the district.

There are plans to deliver more such workshops in 2011.

Looking to 2011

2010 was the completion of our tenth year of operation. We have created a successful model for nature-based learning and most importantly been able to test the model over the decade. At the threshold of our second decade, GICEL is looking at expanding its learning opportunities to include young teens, a broader range of teachers and to start the planning for residential, overnight programs in partnership with the Saturna Ecological Education Centre, as well as, exploring the development of facilities at Burgoyne Bay Provincial Park.

GICEL's New Website

Mike Hoebel

GICEL's website (www.gicel.ca) was re-launched in October, 2010. With John Cameron's help the website has been completely redesigned to not only provide information about GICEL and our programs, but also to serve as a portal to information about eco-literacy and the children and nature movement. There is also a blog with current news from GICEL and its partner organizations, and other interesting news items related to GICEL's goals. So whether you're looking for registration information for this year's Summer Earth Education Program, or interested in the latest thinking about "nature-deficit disorder", the GICEL website is the place to visit. Please email micel@gicel.ca with news items for the blog or to give us your ideas for additional features you would like to see on the website. We'd love to hear from you!



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 \$ _____

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