



Spring 2017 **GICEL**

16 Years of bringing nature experiences to all

<http://www.gicel.ca>

## Eco Anxiety

Have you noticed over recent years how new terms creep into the language fostered by our underlying concern for the health of the environment on Earth? One such term I heard recently on CBC radio was “eco anxiety,” which, according to the report, is anxiety suffered by people leading regular lives in our industrial society caused by their feeling of helplessness in the face of continuing reports about the effects of climate change and other damage to the environment. They feel both helpless and hopeless because the problems seem to be too big for them to be able to do anything about them.

Another negative condition coined by environmentalist Richard Louv some years ago is “nature-deficit disorder.” This is a condition suffered by children in particular because of their lack of exposure to the natural world and consequent ignorance about the world of nature in which all life is embedded. This problem was cited in another CBC radio report I heard

recently, expressing concern that many children are so over-programmed by their parents in sports and other social activities and lessons that they have much less time to play than children of a few generations earlier. What time they do have for play is all too often spent online with new technological devices that keep their eyes focussed on a screen indoors rather than experiencing the wonder of nature outdoors.

In thinking about this, I was struck by the fit between the two conditions cited



Fulford students in the woods



water exolorations

above. Children who suffer from lack of exposure to the natural world today will become the eco anxious adults and parents of tomorrow. The inevitable outcome will be a worsening of both conditions in future generations, which can only result in eventual environmental breakdown as too many people grow up in ignorance of and appreciation for the foundation of life on the planet.

But this does not have to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. The solution is obvious: spend more time outdoors in natural landscapes. We are blessed in British Columbia to have so many such opportunities available to us, where, even in the densest population centres, access to green space is readily available, if one goes in search of it. In addition, the opportunity to get one's hands into the dirt of a backyard or community garden and experience the wonder of new life bursting forth as tiny plants poke their heads up out of the soil is never too far away.

It was the understanding of the potential for negative impact on well-being of children if they were denied access

to outdoor experiences in nature that prompted the development of GICEL's Summer Earth Education Programs more than fifteen years ago. This was long before terms like "eco anxiety" and "nature-deficit disorder" entered the language. In 2017 we are pleased and proud to report that all of our programs are flourishing and spreading to new locations for longer periods of time. You can read about this good news in other items in this newsletter.

However, while the trend towards greater dislocation between human activity and the natural world continues, we must do everything we can to encourage the spread of the GICEL example wherever we can. May this be a commitment we all make in this year when Canada is celebrating its 150<sup>th</sup> birthday, that we enter the march towards a second century with renewed commitment for a goal that humanity will finally learn how to manage its development in harmony with the natural world. There could be no greater legacy to leave for tomorrow's generations.

*Desmond Berghofer PhD*  
*Vice-Chair*



chickens explore Fernwood's gardens





## Report from GICEL Board Chair - For January - December, 2016

GICEL's very popular Summer Earth Education Program (SEEP) was offered again in 2016, and was a great success.

### Board Membership

Members of the GICEL Board of Directors for 2016 were: Michael Hoebel (Chair), Desmond Berghofer (Vice-Chair), Andrew McPhee (Secretary), Michael Dunn (Programs), Shelly Johnson, Lisa Halstead, Marie Mullen, Tina Farmilo, and Jeff Hopkins.

### Board Meetings

Meetings of the Board were held on January 22, April 29, and September 30, 2016.

*Michael Hoebel*



Fernwood Greenhouse





*Fulford Community Elementary School*

## **School District 64 (Gulf Islands) Update**

**Submitted by: Lisa Halstead, Superintendent**

The Gulf Islands School District is committed to the development of ecological literacy for all students at all school sites within our district. This is reinforced in the district's 2016-2019 Strategic Plan that can be found at: <http://sd64.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/strategic-plan-20160413-.pdf>

Objective 2.1 Action 1 of the Strategic Plan focusses on Developing a sense of place through ecological literacy.

In keeping with this goal, this year's submission to the GICEL newsletter is designed to provide a snapshot of just a few of the initiatives in the eleven schools in the district. A more comprehensive overview can be obtained from visiting each school's website!

### ***Fernwood Elementary School***

While Fernwood Elementary supports eco-literacy on an ongoing basis with many programs including

nature classes and gardening, we wanted to highlight one particular feature of our nature class program. Several times a year, Fernwood's nature classes



catching crabs at Fernwood Beach

experience an eco-immersion week, where they head out to a natural space to learn in nature every day, all day, for a whole week. This promotes a systems thinking view of the different aspects of nature that they study. For example, in class, they have studied in depth the shoreline, tree species, eelgrass, seasons, animals, etc. However, when immersed in a natural setting for a long period of time, they see how all of these aspects connect and influence each other. It's a great way to meet many aspects of the curriculum, and is a lot fun for the students as well!

### ***Fulford Community Elementary School***

One of Fulford School's Guiding Values is for students to connect with nature to deepen their understanding of place and foster stewardship. Fulford School has a long history of nature-based learning that is integrated into all of the classes and is the basis of our two nature-focused classes that spend up to half of the day learning outdoors. All classes develop eco-literacy through projects around the water theme (Fulford Creek and Harbour), our garden and other place-based projects. As a Wild School (through Wild BC) our teachers have engaged in 4 years of professional development in hands-on environmental learning and experiences that engage students in active, inquiry-based learning in and about nature. In addition, our classes participate regularly in Go Grant projects with local Eco-Mentors and artists. Eco-literacy is woven into the very fabric of Fulford School.



### ***Galiano Community School***

Learning in and from our natural surroundings is an integral part of our whole school focus at GCS. We begin 3 out of 4 mornings outside together hiking, climbing, running during our morning



fitness. MY GEEC's (Middle Years Galiano Ecological Education Class) Gr 6-8 class is based in Eco Literacy principles. The GEEC's are proud of the disc golf course ("Hide and go GEEC" trail) that they designed and built, as well as the 'community campfire' zone we created at school. Disc golf and campfires are two fun ways that the GEEC's eco passion and influence have trickled in to the whole school culture.

### ***Gulf Islands Secondary School***

A recent example of an Eco-Literacy initiative at the district's secondary school was: Live at GISS!—a performance by Baba Brinkmann. On Thursday, April 13th, GISS students, teachers and staff hosted a visit and were given a special performance by the world's only peer-reviewed climate change hip hop artist Baba Brinkmann. Baba's unique performance style combined science with artistry, social responsibility with poetry, provided a critical message delivered through truly engaging and humorous showmanship. The program for GISS featured the *RAP Guide To Climate Chaos*.





Tidepool explorations

### *Mayne Elementary/Jr. Secondary School*

The Mayne Island Conservancy has the pleasure of working closely with School District 64 staff at the Mayne Island School to create educational nature experiences for their students. This project has been evolving over a period of more than 5 years, and is very successful. The key to our success is close communication and planning as a team; with each member bringing an important component to the education experience. We plan our lesson content with school staff months in advance, so that field trips complement the science curriculum and reinforce concepts taught in the classroom. We bring expert knowledge on local species, ecosystems, and ecological processes, and lead students to key locations throughout the island where they can experience firsthand the ecosystems they learn about.

### *Pender Islands Elem./Sec. School*

School wide initiatives include a comprehensive recycling, composting and gardening program as well as the solar panel project.

K-1 students participate daily in recycling and composting their lunch waste. They also learn about energy conservation, turning out lights and conserving water.

Grade 1-2-3 students recently collected artifacts from nature and communicated their findings to their classmates. In addition the students were encouraged to identify the origin of their artifact. For example a student with a pine cone was encouraged to find out which tree it came from. The students were given the choice to write about or draw their artifacts.

Grade 4-5 students were conducting scientific observations on the effect of contaminants (salt and sand and salt and sand combined) on the melting rate of ice.

Grade 6-7-8 students have participated in several workshops on the identification, collection and preparation of local edible plants. Students have also been learning about local plants that have health and medicinal qualities.

The Grade 4-8 classroom has an overall focus on ecological and place-based learning with regular time spent outdoors.

The Spring Leaves family /home-based learning program deeply engages students in collaborative and local ecological projects, including the school garden.

The solar panel project: as of last year our school roof is covered with numerous solar panels which generate an impressive amount of electricity to power the school. Students can use a website that tracks

the energy generated to learn more about solar power. This project came to fruition thanks to the combined volunteer efforts and donations contributed by local community groups, the students, our school staff, parents, community members and our school district.

### *Phoenix Elementary School*

The Phoenix Elementary School teachers and students have been exploring Eco-literacy throughout the year. With Mouat Park right next door there is a good opportunity to explore including playing games like a scavenger hunt for garbage items as well as nature walks with habitat studies and stream studies that experiment with water flow changes through rubber duck races. There has been a lot of work in the garden with the rainwater harvesting project as well as compost and soil studies. There has also been some wonderful creations of environmental arts and a picnic with little buddies using the wild and native plant cards. The school is also planning to create a Phoenix Elementary School Wilderness ABC book.

### *Saltspring Island Middle School*

At SIMS, we have been focussing on fostering the knowledge, skills and values essential to sustainable living in the past several years. We recognize that students learn best when teaching strategies include hands-on activities, time for reflection and thoughtful discussion, a mixture of indoor and outdoor environments, and opportunities to integrate inter-disciplinary projects. We focus on eco-literacy in a variety of ways: place-based learning, project-based learning and experiential learning being at the core of most things that we do.

We are lucky to be guided by our MYSEEC programs, who embody these ways of learning. Based on the work of Steve Dunsmuir, the first MYSEEC teacher, they deepen the idea of 'place based' learning by looking to the broadest definition of 'ecology' as "the study of our place". They explore this concept by considering five 'place-based' perspectives: learning **about** our place; learning **within** our place; learning **from** our place, learning **for** our



SSE endangered species fair





building garden terraces at SSE

place and learning as our place. All of these perspectives have, at their heart, the concept that by studying our close and natural environment, we can both broaden and deepen our learning about ourselves, our community and our world and have the knowledge and will to effect positive change in all of these areas.

### *Salt Spring Elementary School*

Salt Spring Elementary has had a huge focus on Eco-literacy this year. The two new nature based classes have been a huge success. They have been involved in numerous place based inquiry projects including creek monitoring and soil study. These two classes created a new front garden. The students were involved in the design and construction, and the teachers wrote a grant to pay for the materials. We also have a parent-led garden initiative in the upper garden. Parents and students have held several weekend work parties and are busy terracing, clearing and planting. The dream is to create a space that can be used by both SSE and SIMS. As well, five of our classes partnered with the Salt Spring Conservancy to study

species at risk. This project culminated in a Species at Risk Fair where students displayed their projects to other classes, parents and community members.

### *Saturna Elementary School/SEEC*

SEEC has been successful in winning the Science World Green Games video entry for a second year. Additional information on the Forest Restoration Project can be found at: <https://bcgreengames.ca/project/forest-restoration-galiano-conservancy-association1821>.

Additionally, further eco-literacy work happens weekly at the elementary school with our younger students. The class takes exploratory walks to the beach, or in the woods on most days. Rather than travel on known trails the class often finds routes among the old growth trees, erratics and across the salmon stream. The teacher takes time to point out natural features, hidden animal trails, and evidence of human habitation. Once the class returns, these discoveries become part of each child's personalized journal entry.



### *Windsor House School*

Windsor House abounds with eco literacy. With our Farm and Forest programs we have an immersive environment where everyday discussions revolve around natural systems, and the cycle of life. This unfolds daily, for example, recently a student discovered 12 baby rats in the compost pile and the mother rat was already dead. There was a deep discussion about what baby rats need to survive, and the likely hood of them not making it because their mother had died, and why rats love to live in the compost. In the end a student took them to the wildlife rescue centre where they we will be informed of the welfare going forward. From permaculture, to soaring

eagles, everyday is an adventure with real life outcomes and discussions. Every day students help with farm chores on the farm. With our forest, beach, and coywolves programs students explore, hike, and create art, in a natural setting. It is the emergent discussion and discovery that forms the basis for our eco literacy.

### *Outer Islands Middle Years Program*

In addition to the rich programming offered at individual school sites, students from Saturna, Mayne, Galiano, and Pender Islands have the opportunity to take part in the Outer Islands Middle Years Program. Additional information about this program (and pics that show learning in action) can be found at: <http://oimyprogram.blogspot.ca/>



SSE's garden project



## **GICEL Seedlings**

A Nature Day Camp for the Early Years on Mayne Island

In 2017 the GICEL *Seedlings* Early Years Nature Day Camp on Mayne Island will be celebrating its fourth year of ecological learning for children ages three to five years. The program emphasises the importance of play, and the free exploration of self and the world in a welcoming natural environment, lovingly supported by experienced educators.



**The Rope Swing**

The location offers the children the freedom of a meadow and a forest wherein to explore and make themselves “at home”, and a perfect outdoor ‘studio’ where paint and clay are freely available and mess is never a concern. I tell the parents: “Your children will get (very) dirty every day.” And they do!

We play, we sing, we swing, we build a fort, we paint faces and walls and sticks (for the fort) and rocks (for the Camouflage Game), we go on hikes, bushwhack and make maps afterwards to show where we’ve been and what we found there. We tell stories, and read aloud, and play games of all sorts.

We explore with all our senses, we get curious about bugs, and animals and birds, weeds and trees and garden-plants.



**Painting the Sticks**





In the fort

We eat lots of snacks, and socialise, and make new friends. The ratio of staff to children is high ~ especially important for these very young campers.



Boys enjoying the company of our junior leader Jasper



Looking at a snail

We continue the policy of mentoring young volunteers and junior staff (themselves graduates of other GICEL Nature Day Camps) whose presence adds immeasurably to the richness of the experience for everyone involved. Every day is full of joy and discovery.

Tina Farmilo  
*Seedlings* Coordinator  
 Mayne Island BC, April 2017



# 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 fifteen 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 \_\_\_\_\_

**I will send a Child to Camp for a week**

1 child \$200 \$ ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

2 children \$400 \$ ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

3 children \$600 \$ ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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

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