



Spring 2010

GICEL

2010 Ten years of bringing nature experiences to all

<http://www.gicel.ca>

Report from Board Chair For Year January 1, 2009 – December 31, 2009

In 2009 the Board continued to oversee the offering of GICEL's summer programs and other activities. A report on the summer programs is found elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Board Membership

There was no change to Board membership during the year. 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), Steve Dunsmuir, Cate McEwen and Russ Searle.

Board Meetings

The Board held regular meetings on February 6, April 3, June 12 and October 2. The AGM was held on April 3.

Get to Know Program

The Board explored the possibility of collaboration with the Get to Know Program, which seeks to create the interest of children in nature by sponsoring a program of virtual hikes. The Board decided not to proceed with this collaboration, but is exploring the possibility of working with Electronic Arts Games to use electronic technology as an information support to nature based learning.

Fund Raising

The fiscal climate in 2009 was not conducive to grant support so the Board did not proceed with any new grant applications. A limited appeal by letter in the fall to GICEL supporters raised \$1575. Summer programs on individual islands continued to receive substantial grants from supporting organizations.

Conservancy Programs for Schools

In accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Gulf Islands School District #64 the GICEL Board began work on reviewing the school programs offered by conservancy organizations on Salt Spring Island, Galiano Island and Mayne Island. This work is ongoing.

These were the major activities of the GICEL Board in 2009.

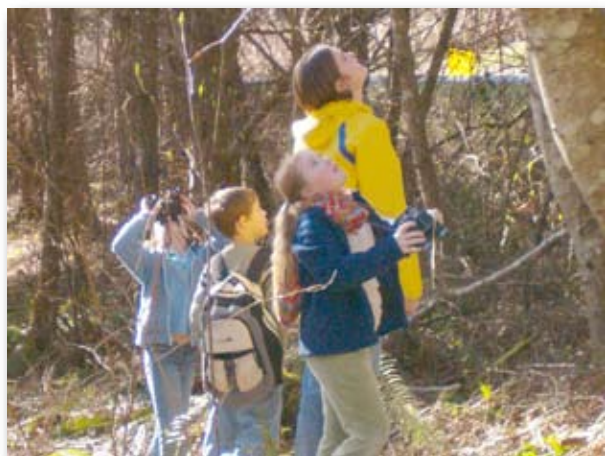
GICEL • Reaches Two Important Milestones

GICEL will reach two important milestones in 2010. Originally a milestone was one of a series of numbered markers placed along a road at intervals of one mile. The practice dates back to Roman days when it was used to inform travellers of how far they had travelled. Milestones are reference points along the way. They tell you where you are, how far you have come from some starting point, and how far you have to go to reach your destination.

From this original meaning of a physical marker, a secondary meaning for “milestone” emerged signifying “an important event” or perhaps “a turning point” in life or some enterprise. It is in this latter sense that GICEL is celebrating two important milestones in 2010.

GICEL has been offering its summer courses in ecological learning for ten years. That is one milestone. Also, this year our one-thousandth student will take a GICEL course. That is our second milestone. This fall we intend to celebrate and we invite you to join us. We will be telling you more about what we have planned as the year goes along.

It is worthy of note that GICEL has reached its two milestones just as the nations of the world



reached a milestone of their own along the road to ecological awareness. I am referring to the Global Conference on Climate Change held in Copenhagen in December 2009. It was a milestone in the sense that most of the world's developed and developing nations actually came to the meeting. However, it was by no means a turning point in political commitment to address the issue of global warming.

Unfortunately, much of the debate about global warming has centred on whether this is a natural phenomenon or whether it is being induced by human activity. Positioning the debate in these terms misses the point entirely that future generations are facing life on a planet much less habitable than what we and our ancestors have enjoyed. That is a terrible indictment of the current governing authorities who are allowing this trend to continue without treating it as the emergency that it is. The immediate priority is for us, the current generation in charge, to make drastic changes in the way that we live and work that will give our children and grandchildren and those who follow them the best possible prospects for the future.

But politicians will not make these changes unless the people force them to act, and people will not press this issue if they do not properly understand it. That is why the work of GICEL and other like-minded organizations is so important. We must continuously increase our efforts to give our students, who will be the leaders of the next generation, the knowledge and the value for how to live in balance with the natural world.

Industrial societies tend to be fixated on continuously treating symptoms rather than causes. Climate change and environmental degradation are symptoms of a much deeper cause, which is the industrial mindset that



we can indefinitely grow our economies on a finite planet. This puts the human agenda in potential tragic conflict with natural law.

The industrial economies that our politicians are so concerned about preserving are a principal cause in the breakdown of ecological systems, whether it be failing salmon stocks or melting ice sheets in the Arctic and Antarctic. The industrial mindset refuses to recognize that growth has its limits and that humanity in its collective activity on the planet is dangerously close to exceeding those limits with no safe way to return to balance. Where we need to place a high priority is on the one human activity where there are no limits, which is human learning, and, in particular, ecological learning supported by cultural activities that lift the human spirit towards enterprises based on empathy and cooperation.

So, let us then in 2010 celebrate GICEL's twin

milestones. In doing so let us find the energy and conviction to commit to increasing our sphere of influence in a world that desperately needs what we have to offer. Perhaps then we could look forward to political and corporate leadership that would enact international agreements and governing policies based on ecological realities rather than aggressive human agendas for growth. That would truly be an important milestone.

Desmond Berghofer
Chair



Our Summer Earth Education Programs (SEEP)

Our 2009 summer programs were held on 4 of the Gulf Islands again this year. For the first time, we offered three weeks of programs on Salt Spring Island. Collectively, this represents 8 weeks of programs offered with a total attendance of 142 placements, the highest summer enrolment we have recorded since our first program in 2001. On Mayne Island, for the first time we had to establish a waiting list for placements and were not able to accommodate all those families who wished to register their children or grandchildren. In order to maintain the quality of the experience for participants as well as, maximize safety, GICEL strives to ensure that the ratio of children to leaders and support leaders is as low as is possible (generally between from 6 to 8 to 1). The costs of additional staff and the need to keep registration fees low are also considerations for limiting our enrollment. What we can take from this is that the demand for experiential, nature-based learning in a rapidly changing world continues to grow. Presently, the GICEL Board and summer staff are exploring options for the future to find a way to evolve with this demand and the realities of our present world.

Part of the reasons for the high interest in our summer programs is the quality and energy of our summer staff. We have been very fortunate in having senior local coordinators/leaders who have been designing and delivering these programs over many years. In this tenth year, the GICEL Board would like to acknowledge some of these outstanding people. Sarah Myers and Jessica Reveley for Salt Spring Island; Christy Neufeld and Julie Johnston for Pender Island; Suusa Gueur and Jessica Willows for Mayne Island; and, Jessica Reveley and Jessica Willows for Saturna Island.

Again this year with the generous support of our community sponsors on each of the islands, we were able to provide a substantial level of bursaries to families wishing to send their children to our summer programs. This year the bursaries amounted to over \$6,000. In this we thank our local funding partners for their continuing and generous support of our work. The Board wishes to especially recognize several local partners who have provided regular funding through GICEL's first decade. Without them we would not be where we are today. These include the Barraclough Foundation, the Capital Regional District, the Parks and Recreation Commissions of Mayne, Pender and Saturna islands, the Mayne Island Agricultural Society, the Mayne Island Recycling Society, the Lions Clubs of Mayne and Pender islands and the Pender Nu tu yu Store.



Child in Nature Alliance

Over the year, GICEL continues to provide advise on the development of this Canadian national alliance. The first Annual General Meeting was held in the fall of 2009 and the first board of directors was chosen which includes representation from across Canada; truly an inspiration as to the level of interest in getting children out into nature. GICEL is considered an experienced practitioner in the delivery of programs for children which espouse the objectives of the Alliance. It is our intent to continue our involvement and where appropriate contribute to the on-going evolution of this very important organization. Please look at the website www.childnature.ca to find out recent events in this vein as well as a number of reports and activities that support the psychological and physical health benefits of outdoor experiences for all ages, particularly children.

Looking Forward

GICEL has a very close working relationship with the Gulf Islands School District#64 which is supported by a Letter of Understanding between the two organizations. In this regard, GICEL at some time in the near future will be able to host residential programs during non instructional periods at the Saturna Ecological Education Centre field station. This station, as reported elsewhere in this newsletter, is currently under construction and its use scheduling will be coordinated in the coming year.

GICEL was an early funding partner for the acquisition of private lands on Salt Spring Island. These lands became part of the new Burgoyne Bay Provincial Park which over the last two years has undergone a management planning process. GICEL participated and presented a written proposal on its desire to

operate a day use facility within a portion of the park lands. The draft management plan was completed in 2009. The expectations of GICEL within this plan have been met with the general objectives statements and appropriate uses statement, as follows:

Management objectives

Overnight accommodation for educational or interpretive programs may be considered on the footprint of the old Camp Narnia site.

Appropriate Uses

Commercial Recreation Opportunities
(facilities based – education camp)

Based on this, GICEL will now engage with BC Parks on how to best realize these objectives while the plan goes through its approval process within the BC government and identified interests.

As announced in our last newsletter, GICEL has been given space in the Parks Canada facility at Georgina Point on Mayne Island. This space is currently being used for storage and general office purposes and over the coming year we will enter into a formal agreement with the Gulf Islands National Park Reserve for a more permanent occupancy of the site.

Our partnership with Royal Roads Continuing Studies continues to evolve and at present we are participating in a new proposal for developing nature-based ESL programs for foreign students. This proposal is in its infancy, but at this early stage GICEL is seen as one of the partners for delivery of the nature based programs.

Members of the GICEL board have developed an eco-literacy awareness and training

program for teachers based on the School District's literacy and learning plan. This initial offering of the workshop is being tied to a Professional Development day or a non-instructional day within the district. As of this printing, the first workshop will be held in April 2010.

**Mark your Calendars!!!
We're having a party!**

It has been 10 years since the Gulf Islands Centre for Ecological Learning was conceived and during this year we will surpass the 1000th participant in our various programs. This to us is a great record and we would like to celebrate the occasion with all our partners, parents, grandparents and children who have been part of this great adventure. So, please

mark down **October 22, 2010** as the day to help us celebrate a decade of nature-based education.

Tentative plans are in the making and there will be both day activities and an evening event on Salt Spring Island. We will keep you apprised of developments and formal invitations will be sent out as the date draws near.

2010 Summer Earth Education Programs

Salt Spring Island	July 12 to July 30, 2010
Pender Island	July 12 to July 16, 2010
Mayne Island	August 2 to August 13, 2010
Saturna Island	August 16 to August 20, 2010



SEEC Middle Years on Salt Spring Island

Our school district currently offers many excellent programs for middle years learners and we are always exploring new ideas for diversifying the educational options available to the families and learners of the Southern Gulf Islands. With that in mind, we have been considering a few interesting questions...

What if you took all the best aspects of the Saturna Ecological Education Centre (SEEC) and could create a multi-age, place-based learning community in the Ganges area where students from all of our islands could come together in one exciting Middle Years ecological education cohort?

And, what if Salt Spring Island was your program's home base, but your students also explored and interacted with all of the other islands so that the Southern Gulf Islands became their amazingly diverse and exciting natural classroom?

School District #64 is exploring just such a possibility and is distributing more specific information about this program idea to families throughout the Gulf Islands in order to evaluate the level of interest in such an educational option. With an information meeting scheduled for Thursday, March 25 at 7 pm in the Salt Spring Middle School library, we are looking to collect enough applications of interest by April 1 in order to make this program a reality for the fall of 2010.

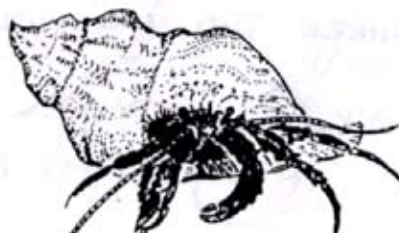
Such a program would be modeled on the current SEEC program, which is in its third year of operation on Saturna Island. This program has attracted students from Saturna, Galiano, Pender, Nanaimo, Victoria, Vancouver and Salt Spring Island, though the commute for off-island learners has been

quite challenging. By centralizing the popular Middle Years part of the program in Ganges, most students will have much easier access to SEEC's unique approach to ecological, constructivist and experiential education.

Much is still to be determined based on feedback from our communities, but the basic idea at the moment is to invite learners in grades 5 to 8 to enroll in one multi-age learning community featuring differentiated instruction, regular overnight experiences at the Haggis Hollow Outdoor Learning Centre on Saturna Island, and a blurring of the lines between school and community. Many details such as the actual site, resources, staffing and partnerships with other schools have yet to be worked out, but Steve Dunsmuir, founder and current principal educator at SEEC, will be the program coordinator and main teacher.

This program may be a good fit for students who like to be adventurous, hands-on, outside, active, and immersed in nature, yet it will not be the best educational option for every learner. Students will be expected to become increasingly independent, while also responsible for the health and vibrancy of their interdependent learning community. Students who prefer traditional routines, being plugged into electronic devices, always being comfortable, relying on others for their learning or entertainment, and staying clean, would definitely find SEEC to be a major challenge!

For more information, please contact Steve Dunsmuir at Saturna School (250 539 2472) (email: sdunsmuir@sd64.bc.ca).





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 almost 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 \$ _____

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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