



Spring 2022 **GICEL**

<http://www.gicel.ca>

**20 Years of bringing nature experiences to all**

## A Decade of Transformation

The decade of the 2020s is shaping up to be a time of transformation for people all over the world.

Through a continuous stream of bad news reporting by mainstream media, we are only too well aware that humanity in the 21st century is facing concurrent crises that threaten to overwhelm us—a changing climate with severe weather events, extinction of species, collapsing ecosystems (all of these on the environmental front); and global inequality, pockets of destitution, outbreaks of war triggered by naked aggression in several parts of the world (these on the social-economic-political front).

Faced with this bleak reality, it is all too easy to conclude that the future is not going to be a good place to live.

However, from a much more positive perspective, there is a growing body of opinion that in the 2020s we are going to see the beginnings of transformative change that will give reason to be much more hopeful.

Two new publications from credible sources describe what we can expect to see as a counter to the negative news. The first, published in 2021, comes from one of the world's top futurists, Professor William Halal of George Washington University DC.

*by Desmond Berghofer, Vice-Chair*

It is entitled *Beyond Knowledge: How Technology is Driving an Age of Consciousness*. The thesis of this book is that humanity has already begun to transition away from the Age of Knowledge that gave us the Internet, social media, personal computers, smart phones, and a burgeoning technology of artificial intelligence. Halal's research leads him to conclude that human beings rather than becoming subservient to our technology, will transcend to an Age of Consciousness in which the essential qualities that make us human—the ability for conscious reflection, creativity, intuition, spirituality, empathy and love—will become more dominant and enable us to create, with the aid of technology, a sustainable future that will be better for all.

The second publication, just published in February 2022, comes from planetary elder, quantum scientist, philosopher, and systems theorist, Dr. Ervin Laszlo. It is entitled *The Upshift: Wiser Living on Planet Earth*. Laszlo argues that the world system of humans has come to a bifurcation point when the instability in the system will cause it to either upshift to a more stable condition, or downshift into chaos and breakdown. His work, in combination with other like-minded individuals and agencies

around the world, is dedicated to ensure that a critical mass of people in every country on Earth will force a conscious upshift to the more stable state, and this will be in evidence by 2030, though it will require many decades to accomplish.

What, you might ask, has all this got to do with GICEL in 2022? The answer is that for the past 20 years GICEL has been at the leading edge of an important part of the transition that Halal, Laszlo, and other important scholars are describing. This is providing ecological learning to young people that enables them to discover and value their connection to the natural world and become leaders in creating a future where humanity lives in harmony with nature, rather than seeking to dominate and exploit it.

This is part of what it will mean to live in an Age of Consciousness: to fashion a relationship with the natural world in which we act as stewards of the environment and design our way of living to be in harmony and balance with what nature provides.

This kind of transformation will be no easy accomplishment, for the industrial world has been drifting in the opposite direction for many centuries. Now, suddenly, in just a few years in the present decade, we are being called to begin to significantly turn things around.

GICEL's ecological learning program on BC's southern Gulf Islands for the past 20 years should be seen for what it is—an island of essential learning and joyful activity for young people otherwise immersed in an ocean of education, much of which is preparing them to live in a world now passing away.

As you read the reports of our 2021 Summer Earth Education Program in the following pages, keep in mind that the young people featured here and in all previous issues of this Newsletter, <http://www.gicel.ca/2010/our-newsletters-are-now-available-online/>

are our best hope for leading their communities into the new Age of Consciousness now struggling to be born.

---

## **Report from GICEL Board Chair for January - December, 2021**

*by Michael Hoebel, Chair*

GICEL returned to delivering in-person children's summer programs in 2021 on Mayne, Pender, and Saturna Islands, after offering online (virtual) programming in the summer of 2020 due to the Covid pandemic. Continuing pandemic restrictions and guidance required that fewer participants could be enrolled in the summer 2021 programs so that groups were smaller, and the Seedlings program for pre-school-aged children was not offered. Nevertheless, everyone was glad to return to in-person learning for older children.

### **Board Membership**

Members of the GICEL Board of Directors for 2021 were Michael Hoebel (Chair), Des Berghofer (Vice-Chair), Tina Farmilo (Secretary), Michael Dunn (Programs), Shelly Johnson, Scott Benwell, Jesse Guy, and Sky Losier.

### **2021 Board Meetings and AGM**

Meetings of the Board were held on March 12, June 18, and October 22, 2021. A special Board planning session took place on July 11, 2021. The 2021 Annual General Meeting of the Society was held on June 18, 2021.



## Pender Island 2021 Program Report

*by Andrea Mills, Pender Island Coordinator*

It was the first week of the summer 2021 and the children were raring to get out after a year of the usual (and maybe a bit more) desk confinement at school. Fifteen campers, myself and a couple of youth volunteers, were glad for a romp through the fields, forest and ocean. The kids had a bit more of the usual end of school anxiety and caution with their new friends, but they quickly made connections.

Like everything else, the 2021 GICEL Camp on Pender Island was a little bit different than our usual camps. We only had 15 participants, and normally we had to turn away a few campers as our camps were capped at 25 so we could take the Community Bus to a couple of our more beautiful and interesting sites. There was also no Community Bus that year, so we made more use of our base camp, walked to the more convenient beaches and asked parents to drop-off and pick up at a different site so that we could explore on our out-trip day. Due to the break in programming from 2020, our usual new contingent of homegrown Junior Leaders, Junior Leaders in Training and Volunteers who had risen from the ranks of camper, had wandered off to explore other opportunities. So we

were left with a couple of volunteers who had never been to our camps before, but were able to help with leading field games, set-up and clean-up of activities, and act as extra eyes.

Camp itself was great, the kids were just so happy to be out and about and getting back to hands on learning. We explored the forest, beaches and grasslands. We played games and snuck in learning that they loved. Having such a small camp was a novelty that, as the camp leader, I quite enjoyed. I was able to have more one on one time with each of the campers and the energy had a nice balance between mellow and camp excitement. Our usual start of camp sanitation discussion, which we have when setting up our outdoor toilet, was a lot more aware and knowledgeable about bacteria, pathogens and viruses than I recall from previous years... but otherwise camp was camp as usual.

2022 is shaping up to be a great summer for Pender GICEL. Parents have already been eagerly contacting me to see when they can register and the team thinks some of our GICEL-wide Junior Leaders in training are ready to take on more significant roles. If the Junior Leaders are interested, we will have them come to Pender and I will try to guide and mentor them to being the awesome, self-sufficient leaders we know they can be.





---

## Mayne and Saturna Island Camps Summer 2021 Report

*Kelly Nordin & Jess Willows*  
Coordinators for Mayne and Saturna Island  
Camps

The GICEL community had a fun and successful summer with five Summer Earth Education Program camps held on three of the Gulf Islands: one on Pender, three on Mayne, and one on Saturna. Families were keen to engage - the camps on Mayne and Saturna were filled to capacity. Participants thoroughly enjoyed being together once again and exploring nature through games, songs, activities, crafts, presentations, and of course, fort building, rock walks, and beach time!

Navigating restrictions and requirements due to the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a few operational differences from previous years. Registration was delayed with numbers of participants per camp capped at 20, in contrast to 30 participants in pre-pandemic years. Due to shifting travel restrictions, registration for island residents was opened first in late May, then fully opened as travel opened in mid-June. Payment of registration



fees by e-transfer was set up and successfully used by almost all families. Most importantly, to ensure the health and safety of all individuals involved, additions and modifications to aspects of the camp program were made - many hands were sanitized and fun games were invented!

During the camps on Mayne and Saturna Island, we were fortunate to have several guest leaders/presenters. Michael Dunn led multiple sessions on Geology of the Gulf Islands, Ocean Wonders and Bird Migration, including joining us for a day on Saturna Island. Katie & Maddie, summer assistants with the Mayne Island Conservancy, led Intertidal Explorations at the two Marine camps and a Forest Scavenger Hunt for the Forest camp. On Saturna Island, Leah Katimura presented a session on the history of Japanese Canadians on the Gulf Islands.

What makes the camps so special are the leaders. All our Senior, Junior and Youth leaders were campers at one time. It is their enthusiasm, knowledge and sense of community that makes GICEL camps a highlight of so many families' summers. A huge thank you goes out to each and every one!

---

## Being A Blossoming Marine Biologist at the Gulf Islands Centre for Ecological Learning Camps

*Keanna Burns, past participant and leader*  
My earliest memories on Mayne Island were on Reef Bay with my grandma. We would peer into tide pools, and she would tell me the names of all the critters, and I would ask her if they were "friendly," meaning, will this bite, sting, or pinch me, Grandma? If they were friendly, I would cup them in my tiny hands and stare in wonder as a hermit crab peeked out from its shell or a shore crab bubbled at its mouth. In 2008, my grandmother first enrolled me in the Gulf Islands Centre for Ecological Learning camp and continued to do so every summer until



I became a junior leader at thirteen. I was very shy at first, but quickly emerged from my shell because of the attentive, kind leaders and the many friends who I could explore Mayne Island's forests and beaches with. At Georgina Point, Michael Dunn taught us to look under flat-bottomed rocks to find the most fascinating creatures, such as clingfish, tiny ochre sea stars, and gunnells. At camp, I also met a marine biologist who waded with me at Bennett Bay and was as excited as I was about all the creatures. I thought to myself, "if this is what a marine biologist does, then I would become one when I grow up."

In the summers, my teachers would encourage me to read long lists of books. When I was on Mayne Island, I thought it was the perfect opportunity to curl up in the sunroom, look out at Reef Bay, and read. My grandma would watch me exasperated, "Why don't you go play outside? Go down to the water and get some fresh air." At this point, I had my younger sister and cousins who would happily join me down at Reef Bay. We were all amazed the first time we saw a hooded nudibranch wriggling in the ocean. When I picked it up, I had to convince them that this nudibranch really did smell like watermelon and I wasn't tricking them by wearing fruity perfume. We all were in GICEL camps and would tell our grandparents about our adventures over dinner. These are now joyful memories that we share to this day, as we recall how fun it was to play



hide-and-seek in a field of tall grass or how refreshing the ocean felt after playing games in the sun.

Today, I am grateful to work at the UBC Institute for the Oceans and Fisheries researching the state of fisheries all around the world, which includes learning about different cultures, political events, and the ecological state in many countries. I often take my grandma's advice to go outside and get some fresh air and I always feel happiest by the ocean. The GICEL camps helped cultivate curiosity and empathy in me at a young age. These experiences made me feel connected to all living things and the environment, which has shaped me as a marine biologist, but most importantly, as a person.



## Special Appeal Your Support is Needed

For 20 years GICEL has provided its ecological learning programs on the Southern Gulf Islands on a cost-recovery basis with some support from local donor agencies. Through its Summer Earth Education camps, GICEL continues to be a leader in providing children and youth the opportunity to connect with nature through learning experiences and play. We know that we have had profound impacts on participants in making life decisions to be stewards of nature at a time when the environment is under threat from human development and a changing climate. GICEL's programs are more important and needed than ever.

We have always kept our fees for attendees and parents below the going rate in order that no child is denied the opportunity to participate due to financial considerations.

Restrictions imposed because of the COVID pandemic, which is continuing into a third year, have had a negative impact on GICEL's finances, and we are looking to our supporters for assistance through donations to GICEL. We are grateful and honoured that you are a supporter of our good news story and we ask that you help us now to recover and go forward to continue the quality of programs and leaders that you expect and to accommodate more attendees.

GICEL is a charitable organization and all donations above \$20 will receive a tax receipt. The box below provides a guide for you to consider in making a donation. Thank you for any contribution you can give.

### Make a donation:

\$25  \$50  \$100  \$150  \$250  Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### Become a Member: \$25/year/person

Yes  No thanks. If yes, how many? \_\_\_\_\_ X \$25 = \_\_\_\_\_

### Please fill out the following form. Fields with an \* are required:

Name\* \_\_\_\_\_

Address\* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail\* \_\_\_\_\_

At this time we are not able to do e-Transfers so please make your cheque payable to and mail to:

Gulf Islands Centre for Ecological Learning

171 Georgina Point Road, Mayne Island, BC V0N 2J1