



Nature's Trust

A friend of mine from Victoria recently sent me a link to the final program of “Bill Moyers and Company” (www.billmoyers.com) on PBS in which Bill Moyers interviewed Dr. Mary Christina Wood, an environmental law professor from the State of Oregon. Dr. Wood described the actions being taken by an organization called Our Children’s Trust to use the judicial system to force legislators to enact and uphold legislation to protect coming generations from the impact of climate change.

One powerful feature of this activity is that the plaintiffs before the courts are teenagers. Dr. Wood asserts that these young people are holding the moral authority for protecting their future that the courts cannot ignore. The courts are not being asked to protect the plaintiffs from climate change, but rather to force government at all levels—local, state and federal—and their agencies to do so.

The approach is based on a legal doctrine of public trust, which fundamentally asserts that government is a trustee of the resources that support our environment. Citizens have enduring rights to the resources that support their survival. The strategy is

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Over ten years of bringing nature experiences to all

<http://www.gicel.ca>

described in Dr. Wood’s book, *Nature’s Trust: Environmental Law for a New Ecological Age*.

What struck me as most compelling in this story was that the plaintiffs are young people who are sufficiently well informed and passionate about the dangers threatening their future that they are willing to stand up in a court of law and bring an action against a government agency for not protecting their environmental rights. Their argument is that the government agencies who are supposed to do this have been coopted by industry, whom they are allowing to destroy future prospects for young people by contributing to climate change.

Where do these young people get their knowledge and passion to stand up for their environmental rights? I don’t know what the answer to that is in Oregon and other US states, but here in British Columbia, I would like to think that young people who go through GICEL’s Summer Earth Education



Rejoicing the sunset, Marina Island – Environmental Leaders Program
Andrew McPhee Photo

programs have the knowledge and passion to become staunch defenders of environmental rights.

Perhaps it is not the Canadian way to engage in litigation to the same extent that Americans do so, but the concept of government as a trustee of the resources that support our environment is a powerful idea that needs to be argued. Above all, we need citizens who will take responsibility for ensuring that the environment is protected for future generations. At GICEL we are proud to be part of fostering ecological knowledge and love of nature that will encourage our young people to be good environmental citizens.

Desmond Berghofer
Vice-Chair

Welcome to the Saturna Ecological Education Centre (SEEC)

Founded on many of GICEL's principles, the Saturna Ecological Education Centre (SEEC) is in its eighth year of providing experiential place-based environmental learning for high school students. A few of our learners are Gulf Islands residents, but more often our students come from further afield to experience the amazing natural and cultural resources of Saturna and the other Southern Gulf Islands. To date, we've welcomed students from Pender, Salt Spring, Gabriola Island, Nanaimo, Victoria, Richmond, Vancouver, North Vancouver, Surrey, Langley, Chilliwack, Mission, Coquitlam, Burnaby, Quesnel, Wells, Saskatoon and Japan!

When people ask us to describe a typical day at SEEC, our usual reply is that there is no such thing. That is very true. With

a holistic, integrated approach to our course work, no bell schedule, no grade groupings, and three very full days and nights on Saturna each week, our days evolve and flow as we explore the world around us through an emergent curriculum. The islands are our classroom and their people and other life forms are our teachers.

Our course selection also varies from semester to semester based on the needs and interests of our students and the specific opportunities provided by our environment. Though students can earn credits at whatever grade level they are currently pursuing, each semester features Environmental Communication (English), Teaching & Learning (sometimes Planning 10, Tourism or Peer Tutoring), Outdoor Pursuits (PE), and an Earth Explorations course such as Biology 11, Geography 12, or our own version of Science and Technology 11: Environmental Citizenship. In addition, students may also co-design their own Independent Directed Studies (IDS) course by creating a community project in an area of interest with the support of a local mentor.

This past semester, our group produced and performed an environmental Christmas performance that we presented to over 600 people in four shows on Salt Spring, Pender and Saturna. Our audiences were very





appreciative of the way our acting, comedy, music and dance communicated a subtle but important message about the need to focus on gifts worth giving as opposed to rampant consumerism. This was but one example of how our SEEC learning experiences and projects integrated key learning outcomes from English, Biology, PE, Teaching and Learning.

As we head in to our spring semester of 2015, we are already registering students for the fall and spring of the 2015-2016 school year and even have families who have asked us to enroll their younger students in future years as far away as 2017-18! We have had ten prospective students join us this year to get a taste of SEEC and many more are scheduled to visit in the next few months. Besides completing our application package (which can be found on our website seec64.ca), we require that each prospective student spends some quality time in the SEEC world so that they can get a clear sense of what we are all about while we get a better sense of who they are.

In addition to prospective students, we are also joined by many of our former students throughout the year. They return

to visit old friends, reconnect with familiar surroundings, reminisce about adventures past, and re-experience the spirit of our program. A dozen SEEC graduates returned for our Christmas Concert this season, blending with our current twelve students to create a very dynamic community as we hiked, played, laughed and shared stories together. SEEC is an extended family of young people

who are welcome to return home from time to time, taking a break from their busy careers, university courses and travels. Many of our graduates have gone on to great success in post secondary and jobs that require a strong environmental ethic.

Besides our semester-based high school program, SEEC also welcomes a number of school and community groups each year. Our students have served as “Environmentors” for visiting learners from as far away as Calgary and Dawson Creek. We even have a few groups who have returned each year for the past eight years and consider a SEEC adventure to be a key part of what they do each trip around the sun! We also partner with Sarah Bateman and the MYSEEC (Middle Years Shared Ecological Education Centre) students, sharing adventures and environmental learning throughout the Gulf Islands.

If you would like more information about our program or are considering if SEEC could be a good fit for your child, please visit our website at www.seec64.ca or email Steve Dunsmuir (sdunsmuir@sd64.bc.ca) and we can set up a visit.

By Steve Dunsmuir, Principal Educator



A Grandmother's Observations

Environmental Leaders Apprenticeship Program on Cortes Island 2014

[My granddaughter] was initially hesitant to go so far from home where she knew only [one of the leaders] and one of the counselors but her experience this summer with being a junior leader at the GICEL camp that she has attended all these years and her trust and enjoyment of you two changed her perspective. The last I saw of her was a quiet, young lady in the truck cab of a neighbor she knows, heading off with her gear onto the ferry.

What a change on her return! From the moment I hugged her off the Mayne Queen and we walked up to the car she was jubilant. She had a "marvelous time." It was all "good", the programs, the food, the adventures, the other kids, the travel, the new sights of places she has never been. "She is going back next year," she announced.

I see a different person or a much stronger capable, quiet person. She was touched to be sleeping out under the stars, to see a wolf footprint in the sand, to work on a farm-"I hauled manure in a wheel barrow, Gramma, just like here and I know how to do it! Being with like-minded kids was very exciting for her. I asked her if she thought her friends from Kelowna would enjoy going.

Report from GICEL Board Chair

For Year January 1, 2014 - December 31, 2014
GICEL's Summer Earth Education Program (SEEP) was offered again in 2014, and was well subscribed. A full report about SEEP is presented elsewhere in this Newsletter, as is a report about School District 64's Saturna Ecological Education Centre program.

In June, 2014 GICEL submitted a letter to the BC Ministry of Education regarding the need to include ecological literacy and a thorough presentation of ecological concepts in the draft new K-9 Science curriculum. At the same time we offered GICEL's experience and expertise to the Ministry to assist with development of the new K-9 curriculum, and also the upcoming new 11-12 curriculum.

Board Membership

Members of the GICEL Board of Directors for 2014 were: Michael Hoebel (Chair), Desmond Berghofer (Vice-Chair), Shelly Johnson (Treasurer), Andrew McPhee (Secretary), Michael Dunn (Programs), Lisa Halstead, Cate McEwen, Steve Dunsmuir, Marie Mullen, and Jeff Hopkins. Sky Losier was appointed to the Board in December, 2014.

Board Meetings

Meetings of the Board were held on January 31, 2014, May 2, 2014, and December 19, 2014.

Michael Hoebel
Chair



Story time under the Maple tree – Seedlings Program

Tina Farmilo photo



No! was her answer. “They like being in the city.”

Later she said to me. “Gramma, I’m half an Islander girl aren’t I?” Yes, she certainly was I agreed. That she could see a wider sense of self-definition possible for herself was very touching to me. All these years of coming to Saturna, her mother’s home as a child, and her away from home forever, suddenly had an identity for her and she judged herself as belonging.

I have never been to Cortes Island. And I will never have [her] experience. The chance you offered was for [my granddaughter], not her mother and not for me-her own. I think that she saw a wider world for the first time and found a place in it for herself where she liked herself, a lot.

As her grandmother, I am grateful that you would craft such an inspired program that would simultaneously have her know deeply she is safe and yet give her such confidence to push herself beyond the self she was comfortable and capable of being. The answer is she loved her new emerging self and the experience of the shift

Summer Earth Education, Seedlings and Environmental Leaders Programs 2014 In Brief

The 2014 summer programs were well subscribed this year and we were able to run all programs as proposed. This year

we had an intake of 200 participants over the 6 program offerings. We, again, were able to provide employment for 9 senior leaders and 16 junior leaders or leaders in training. We also had five volunteers. Our community grants totaled \$9, 555 for these programs. In addition, there was \$520 in food vouchers.

The numbers by program include:
Salt Spring Island - 62 participants with 3 Senior* and 4 Junior leaders
Mayne Island – 64 participants with 3 Senior and 4 Junior leaders
Mayne Island – Seedlings – 11 participants with 2 Senior and 3 Junior leaders
Pender Islands – 33 participants with 2 Senior and 3 Junior leaders
Saturna Island – 19 (a new high total!) participants with 2 Senior and 2 volunteer Leaders.

Cortes Island – 13 participants with 4 Senior Leaders

* note that we had senior leaders doing more than one program

Again, we thank all the community organizations who supported our programs for 2014. It has helped us provide our programs to all young people who wish to attend.

Thank you.



Work day on Linnaea Farm, Cortes Island – Environmental Leaders Program
Andrew McPhee Photo



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 \$200 \$ \$ _____

2 children \$350 \$ \$ _____

3 children \$525 \$ \$ _____

Charter Membership (includes life membership) \$1000 \$ _____

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