MESSAGE FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

Catherine Dumouchel and David Zandvliet

Well, summer is upon us and the warmer days allow us to either reflect on our past good works and sometimes to forge ahead with bold new plans. Before the EECOM 2010 conference fades into distant memory, I wanted to first take this opportunity to thank my colleagues for a job energetically taken on – EECOM’s BC Partners: namely the Environmental Educator’s Provincial Specialist Association (EEPSA); Metro Vancouver; Interpretation Canada (BC Section); Green Learning and Simon Fraser University all collaborated to make this event run smoothly. A warm thanks also goes out to Quebec’s AQPERE who facilitated the French programming strand. Together, we planned a large conference (with 320 attending the banquet for example) while also honouring the diversity theme in many ways.

A few statistics to substantiate that claim seem in order.

If conference evaluation forms are to be believed: EECOM 2010 appears to have attracted a broad range of sectors to our program offerings, with Youth (10%), K-12 Teachers (18%), University (19%), NGOs (26%), and Government (31%) all making an appearance at the conference. Attendees categorized their main reasons for attending as Networking, Learning Skills, and Collecting Information. Further, 97% of conference attendees rated the content and quality of presentations at the conference as good or better and indicated that the likelihood that they will use this information in their profession as Very likely (48%) or Probable (42%).

Here are a few comments which illustrate the highlights of EECOM 2010:

“The fieldtrips were a great opportunity to connect with the region and with fellow participants ...”

“The passion that drives the participants and the reinforcement of some of my beliefs when I see colleagues having the same thoughts and arguments ...”

“Very well organized social activities, variety of workshops, banquet and dancers, and Interpralooza ...”

“Philosophical perspectives, going outside ... and the poster sessions unique format!”

So, in closing … thanks again to the team for coming together and pulling together a fine event … it seems that it is possible to seamlessly weave together diverse topics related to youth engagement, teaching, interpretation and research while also entertaining and sharing our region with visitors from across Canada and around the world. We look forward now to EECOM 2011 to be hosted by our colleagues in SOEEA at Regina Saskatchewan, 8-11 June 2011.

Warm regards,
-DZ

Gaviotas: A Village to Reinvent the World?

– by Greg Lowan


In the recently updated version of his book, Gaviotas: A Village to Reinvent the World (2008), Allan Weisman provides an inspiring and comprehensive description of Gaviotas, a community of social and scientific revolutionaries that has survived and flourished in the Colombian llanos (desert-like grasslands) amidst extreme social and ecological upheaval for close to forty years.

Gaviotas was founded in 1971 amidst la violencia, a civil war involving drug lords, socialist guerrillas, reactionary conservative paramilitaries and the Colombian military. The Gaviotans

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EECOM 2010 Leadership Clinic

EECOM’s 2010 National Leadership Clinic in 2010 – “Engagement though environmental education” is now underway. Five teams have been selected that will have the responsibility to design, plan, develop and implement an action plan to strengthen the capacity of their organization’s commitment engagement though environmental education. This leadership clinic is expected to expand and improve networks of educators in environmental education, locally, regionally, provincially and nationally – building on shared experiences and expertise to create new alliances across Canada.

Visit us online for additional details and updates!

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Gaviotas (continued from page 1)

have become ingenious masters of building partnerships with each other and their surrounding social and ecological environment. Their revolutionary soft technologies (simple with minimal ecological impact) have made electricity, clean water and food more easily accessible to communities throughout impoverished regions of Colombia and have drawn worldwide attention.

Gaviotas encourages collaboration that transcends traditional sociocultural barriers and encourages people to contribute what they can while exploring their individual passions. For example, a medical doctor with an interest in architecture might collaborate with an engineer, a sociologist, and an Indigenous Elder to design a hospital wing that accommodates the needs of Indigenous patients.

The Gaviotans also embrace an ethic of partnership with their surrounding ecosystem. For instance, they successfully rejuvenated an ancient forest in the middle of the llanos by re-planting previously abundant indigenous trees.

The forest is now home to a diversity of flora and fauna and also provides food and other valuable resources for the community.

The Gaviotans’ intrinsic creative motivation is a remarkable example of human ingenuity at its best. They have freely shared their wind, solar and other soft technologies around the world and successfully forged strong partnerships across traditional social, cultural and political boundaries in a nation ravaged by internal violence. If a community like Gaviotas can flourish in such harsh conditions, couldn’t the same happen anywhere? Or is their success and resiliency, in fact, a result of their extreme surroundings? Those intrigued by these and other questions should consider reading Weisman’s expertly crafted and inspiring account.

It would also prove a stimulating resource for a broad diversity of subject areas.

More information on Gaviotas can also be found at: www.friendsofgaviotas.org

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Greg Lowan is a doctoral candidate at the University of Calgary. He welcomes correspondence at gelowan@ucalgary.ca.
EECOM 2009 Canadian Awards of Excellence in Environmental Education
Recognizing contributions of outstanding individuals and organizations engaged in environmental learning across the country!

Profiling the winner of the:
Outstanding Governmental Individual: Patrick Robertson

Deeply involved in sustainability education and environmental learning for over a decade, Patrick is a teacher, consultant and facilitator working with a range of partners, including Metro Vancouver, in BC and Canada. He is also the past president and current pro-d co-chair of the Environmental Educators’ Provincial Specialist Association (EEPSA) of the BC Teachers’ Federation and a director of various other community organizations focused on sustainability, social justice, literacy and the environment. Patrick completed a Master of Arts in Environmental Education and Communication at Royal Roads University, with a thesis exploring the drivers and challenges of environmental education in BC. He is currently a Faculty Associate working with pre-service teachers in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University.

I cannot think of another educator in BC, who brings such dedication, interest and professionalism to his work in working with students and educators, while adding his level of experience, breadth of environmental education knowledge, strategic organization understanding and board operation skills to his work as an environmental educator.

– John Stronam

Outstanding K-12 School: Belfountain Public School

Belfountain Public School has reoriented its school focus to incorporate the environment, and its local natural, built and cultural community as the learning context for all grades and subjects. Despite the pressures to organize curriculum in a subject based manner, Belfountain staff have been able to work with their community to develop and implement a highly integrated, student centered program based on learning beyond the school walls. Using a wide range of curriculum based and community action projects – from salmon stocking, wetland restoration, wood duck nesting box monitoring to development of an onsite rain garden, the immediate community and environment have been advanced. Belfountain Public School has applied its school wide, environmentally focused, place-based learning model in a small school in a small community northwest of Toronto. The five year goal is to become a regional centre offering their locally focused environmentally-based program to students in a wider area.

They have had the courage to follow their professional instincts as to what is the best approach for their community, done the research to develop and support the initiative, reached out to get the help they have needed and then offered their experiences in turn to others. I know of no other school/community relationship that has been as successful in bucking the narrow standards driven agenda in education for the last ten or so years and been as successful as this example.

– Stan Kozak, Learning Specialist

The EECOM Awards for Excellence in Environmental Education recognize individuals and organizations who have collectively influenced hundreds of thousands of Canadian citizens, and helped implement one of EECOM’s key goals – to educate and increase the Canadian public’s understanding of the environment and its importance.

For more information contact: Natalie Swayze, Executive Director nswayze@eecom.org (204) 221-2007.
There are many things that give a teacher pleasure: a well-written student assignment, active discussions and meaningful conversations, occasional thanks. But of all the things that might make a teacher’s heart swell, nothing tops, at least to me …seeing your students become active participants in their field and watching them emerge as leaders and as valued colleagues.

The recent conference of the Canadian Environmental Education and Communication Network, held at Simon Fraser University, provided an opportunity to see many current students, alumni, associate faculty and thesis advisors from the Royal Roads University Masters of Arts in Environmental Education and Communication (MEEC) program acting in leadership roles.

In terms of leadership, Patrick Robertson (MA, 2004 cohort) both delivered workshop presentations, was deeply involved in the organizing committee, and was awarded the 2010 EECOM Outstanding Governmental Individual award. Patrick is now a Faculty Associate in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University and will no doubt find his way into a doctoral program and teach prospective teachers in the not too distant future!

Another leader at the conference was Johan Stroman (MA, 2004 cohort), who gave two presentations, was on one panel and had a poster session as well. Other MEEC presenters included Ann Stewart (MA, 2003 cohort) of the Bamfield Marine Science Centre, Erin Desautels (2008 cohort) of the City of Surrey, Teresa Rowley (2008 cohort) a teacher at the TREK program at Prince of Wales Secondary in Vancouver, Graeme Mitchell (2009 cohort), a teacher at Stelly’s Secondary School in Saanich, Nadine Lefort (MA, 2005 cohort), now working with the Sierra Club of BC, Tai Munro (MA, 2005 cohort), now a PhD student at the University of Alberta, Alicia Taylor (2008 cohort), Alla Guelber (2009 cohort), a research associate at the University of Calgary… whew! And I hope I didn’t miss anyone!

These folks, and other MEEC students and alumni who attended but didn’t deliver presentations, gave Royal Roads University a wonderful presence at the EECOM conference ensuring the School of Environment and Sustainability manager Kathie Sammons had a good number of prospective students stopping by her table to talk about enrolling in the MEEC program.

Another soon to be MEEC alumni, Karen Stephenson (2008 cohort), was also presenting aspects of her research over three workshops at the Canadian Unitarian Council Annual Conference and Meeting, held in Victoria this past weekend. Karen will be starting a PhD program in Religious Studies at the University of Alberta this fall.

For a teacher, moments where we see our students become our colleagues and our leaders are the harvest we all hope to reap. This past week, I harvested a hundred-fold.

Rick Kool
Royal Roads University

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

CWF Launches Sailing Summer Institute in Tadoussac

June 11, 2010 – The Canadian Wildlife Federation Learning Institute is setting sail on an extraordinary aquatic adventure Aug. 8 -15 in Tadoussac, Quebec.

The 2010 Summer Institute, “Belugas, Humpback Whales and Biodiversity” will be an amazing sailing voyage of learning along the St. Lawrence River. Top researchers, scientists and education experts will join the 12 registrants from across Canada during the course of their voyages and video cameras will be rolling as participants will be encouraged to capture footage of marine species.

“This unique professional development opportunity features guided explorations of the Saguenay-St. Lawrence Marine Park, where salt water mixes with fresh, and humpbacks swim with fin whales,” said Wade Luzny, CEO, Executive Vice President of the Canadian Wildlife Federation. “The Summer Institute combines science with new technologies and day sailing to encourage explorations of the biodiversity of this protected ecosystem. This is a very important and innovative initiative, as the participants will return to their home communities with new skills, knowledge and insight into critical conservation projects for wildlife and habitat.”

Here are a few highlights of the program, which will be conducted in both official languages.

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CWF Launches Sailing Summer Institute in Tadoussac (cont’d)

- **Sunday, Aug. 8:** Participants arrive in Quebec City then depart for the Saguenay-St. Lawrence Marine Park, where sailboats will be docked.
- **Monday, Aug. 9:** Participants visit the GREMM’s installations in Tadoussac, which were developed by the Group for Research and Education on Marine Mammals. Nautical instruction will be provided and the four monohull boats involved in the Summer Institute will set sail.
- **Tuesday, Aug. 10:** Parks Canada’s officials will join the group for field training about oceanographic conditions that are responsible for biodiversity. New research to protect marine mammals will be described.
- **Wednesday, August 11:** The Summer Institute will be sailing from Tadoussac to Les Bergeronnes for guided field studies. Highlights include visiting the Marine Environment Discovery Centre and communicating with a cameraman-naturalist diving in the St. Lawrence to discover the diversity of marine flora and fauna. Participants will also observe marine birds from the coast with an ornithologist from L’Observatoire d’oiseaux de Tadoussac (OOT).
- **Thursday, August 12:** While sailing to Anse-St.-Jean (Saguenay River) via the magnificent Ste. Marguerite Bay, participants may be able to observe beluga whales.
- **Friday, August 13:** Sailing to Baie Éternité for a visit to the provincial park education centre and possible hike (weather permitting). If time allows kayaking on the Saguenay for whale observation may be offered.
- **Saturday, August 14:** Sailing back to Tadoussac for more beluga observation opportunities in Ste. Marguerite bay. In the afternoon, it will be time for participants to present the results of their studies, including conservation-themed videos.
- **Sunday, August 15:** departure for Quebec City, conclusion of course.

For more information, including a complete schedule of activities and background about the teaching team, visit [cwfEducation.ca](http://cwfEducation.ca).
Over the past two years Buffalo has been greening in anticipation of our arrival, and they are unveiling their progress to us this autumn. Visit their Green & Mean It Web site, www.greenandmeanit.com, where you can learn about their work with Eden Cooperative Farms to begin a permanent solution to local food sourcing and hear about the Federal Block grant they received for their city-wide Industrial Composting Program. The city of Buffalo has an ongoing carbon offset tree planting program through Re-Tree WNY (the same carbon offset provider we will use during the conference) and one of their latest efforts, to have hotels donate their excess toiletries to city missions, shelters and crisis centers, will be established before we arrive in September. Watch your inbox for Conference Alerts where NAAEE conference staff will highlight all the exciting events planned for you in Buffalo-Niagara this year!
The Suncor Energy Foundation has been a long-time supporter of environmental education, acknowledging that education is critical to create awareness about environmental issues and solutions. Funding support for EECOM from the Suncor Energy Foundation helps to ensure continued collaborative efforts in support of environmental literacy for current and future generations.

The Catherine Donnelly Foundation seeks radical and creative ways of responding to the urgent needs of Canadians in the areas of housing, adult education and the environment. The Foundation provides support for EECOM’s efforts to build capacity in Canadian environmental learning.

The call for presentations, workshops, and participation will be made in September 2010. Registration will open March 2011. Please see the SOEEA website for more information www.soeea.sk.ca

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EECOM is grateful for the support of Manitoba Hydro in the production of our newsletter, and especially for the contribution of Sally St. Germain, who takes our disparate pieces and fits them into a professional final product.

**For information about upcoming conferences, courses, and institutes related to environmental education go to the EECOM website: www.eecom.org