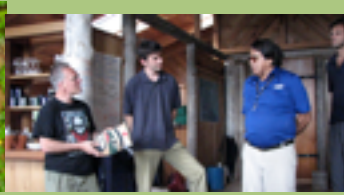


# RRU ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION PROGRAM NEWS



November 2007

It's been a very busy summer and fall, with a fine new and large 2007 cohort, the 2006 cohort having what I would humbly offer was an incredible experience out at Cougar Annie's Garden on the Hesquah Peninsula, and the 2005 cohort designing and producing a moving and wonderful closing to the residency. And of course, the 2004 cohort was there in spirit, as their graduation box was opened, admired and enjoyed (especially the bottle of wine!), as Dan Peters talking stick made its rounds, and all led by the eagle feather of the 2003 cohort.



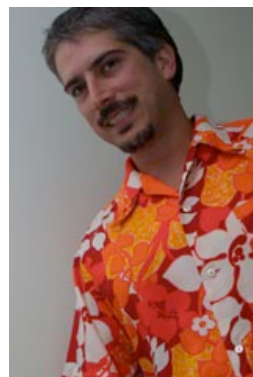
## MEEC graduates are doing wonderful things...

**Dylan Spencer** (2003 cohort) is now a planner in Inuvik with the Gwich'in Land Use Planning Board, and keeps me in touch with all things (or at least many things) Arctic. He recently sent me a [link](#) to a really remarkable

set of images of a polar bear playing with a Huskie near Churchill Manitoba. Dylan keeps connected with **Dr Bob Bennion** (who introduced many of us to the work of George Kelly during the first residency), and sent this link to Bob, who replied with a really wonderful short story from his early life more than 70 years (??) ago in the desert of western Utah.

"One day when I was about 17, I was riding along on my little mustang out in Dugway Valley when I noticed a lot of birds flying around the same general area. I pulled up on the reins and watched. There was a huge, slowly circulating thermal, maybe three-four hundred yards across, and there were birds riding around on it as though it were a giant free-ride merry-go-round. These were birds which often are enemies. There were two golden eagles, assorted Red-tailed, Marsh and Cooper hawks, a few Peregrine falcons and other knife-winged sorts, probably forty ravens and twenty sundry small seed-bug-eating birds. Some were

close to the ground; the eagles were the highest. As I watched, two nearby ravens began gagging to each other. I noticed that one of the two had a branch, maybe eighteen inches long, clutched in her/his claws. S/he made some sounds and dropped the stick. The partner flipped upside down and caught the stick, righted itself, and circled on around until the first raven was underneath him/her. Then that raven croaked out a signal and dropped the stick, and the partner flipped upside down and caught the stick. Nobody can tell me those birds weren't gathered to take advantage of the thermal, sharing it, and having a lot of fun. Likewise, I have not talked to a naturalist about this, knowing I would be accused of anthropomorphizing and being a flat-out liar or romantic looney."



**Arthur Orsini** (2003 cohort) has a great [website](#), and keeps moving (no pun intended) the sustainable transportation agenda. Arthur recently wrote

"I'm looking for financial support to choose to cross the country by rail rather than fly. Later this month I will be traveling from Vancouver to Toronto (for the fifth time this year!) to continue my part in planning the [YWALK forum](#)

[within the Walk21 conference](#) ).... I want to take the train because I hear absolutely no opposition to flying. It is my hope to see a growing market for

travel by train - I want to experience the train and contribute to its promotion. Aside from the high cost, I can see that the potential barrier of it taking three days (Van-T.O.) could be quite an incentive - a relaxing, beautiful glimpse across this country. And with wireless and a laptop - it could seem more of a vacation than a trip."



**Brenda Maclauchlan** (2003 cohort) dropped me an email while she was holidaying on Saltspring Island early in the summer. She wrote "I have been planning/dreaming a native plant nursery for some time now. I planned to start a native plant nursery north of Regina this spring but this has altered-

the plants are arriving June 10th but for the moment it is not clear where they are going to reside. The seller of the land I wanted to buy never got back to his real estate agent or to my lawyer and as the winds of May whipped across the prairie this land looked less appealing to me - so I am still looking- if I have not found the right place by the time the plants arrive I will plant them at Granddaughters Hills (the quarter section we farm that is adjacent to the quarter of native prairie). I am looking forward to working with and learning from these plants. "



**Andrea Swain** (2003 cohort) had her first child this spring, Ayla Lee Swain Cottes. Andrea wrote "She was born on May 2, 2007. She weighed 8lbs 3oz. and she was 21.5 in long. She is a happy, healthy, bundle of joy! Jeff asked me what was harder "writing my thesis or giving birth?". I hate to admit it but writing my thesis was a lot more painful!!



**Paula Sobie** (2003 cohort) and **Martin Scaia** (2004 cohort) have set up a new business in Victoria. "City Harvest is a business which uses urban space in Victoria, BC.—yards or vacant land—to produce hand-tended, organically-grown vegetables to market. City Harvest is locally owned and operated by Paula Sobie and Martin Scaia and it relies on

SPIN-Farming methodology, a proven organic-based growing technique that adapts commercial farming techniques to sub-acre land masses. S-small P-lot IN-tensive Farming can be used in rural or urban locations, yet it's greatest environmental and social benefits are realized when it is practiced close to the population who will consume the food (in the city). Some home owners rent their yards to SPIN Farmers to transform them into beautiful gardens, however most opt to receive some of the harvest bounty as payment instead." Take a look at their [website](#).



Paula and Martin ran in to problems, though, with by-laws against farming in Oak Bay... a good story about the controversy appeared in our [local paper](#).



**Shawna McKinley** (2004 cohort), achieved one of her "must do" life goals, appearing as a Cover Girl (or woman) in the trade journal MeetingsNet. Shawna, now the Executive Director of the Green Meeting Industry Council, was interviewed in an article called "Green Queen" in [MeetingsNet](#) . See her [blog](#) for more about what she's up to!



**Victoria Smith** (2004 cohort, and note the **pigeon** that joined us on the last day of the 2004 cohort's first residency) returned from her internship with the International Institute for Sustainable Cities, where she was working in the Mayors office in Dar es

Salaam, Tanzania on issues around urban sustainability. She tells me that she is working on a research publication with her thesis supervisor, Dr. Ann Dale, based on Victoria's thesis work in Whistler BC. She has also presented both her thesis work and her work in Africa to the BC Hydro Board of Directors and to Whistler's Mayor and Council. Victoria's still at BC Hydro, but angling for a new position in the realm of Sustainable Communities.



**Renay Eng-Fisher** (2004 cohort) has been engaged in a remarkable project: establishing an Eco-orphanage in China. "Many of you know that I started an orphanage in China, and registered a not for profit society in Alberta called the [Eco Village of Hope Society](#). When I visited China for the first time in March/April this year I was appalled at

the conditions these orphans were living in at the state orphanage. The babies and children were fed only twice a day with 6 ozs of mashed rice and diluted powdered milk. Their little stomachs were grossly extended and their little ribs were showing, scars from ill treatment and falling out of their narrow beds onto the hard concrete floor. It broke my heart to see these beautiful children sitting in a corner of a long dark grey room with no pictures on the walls, no books, toys, or nurturing and no hope in their eyes. None of the children spoke, there was 1 caregiver to 19 children and she was a village woman hired by the state to feed and change the children. Before I left China in April, I made a deal with the Social Welfare House Director General that I would provide whatever he needed if we (EVHS) could come in and start a nurture/nanny program in their orphanage. To my surprise he asked if this would cost him any money, and when I said no, then he said he needed milk, I purchased 3 months worth, because I thought that is how long it would take me to raise enough money to send a trainer over to start the program and starting nurturing these children back to health.

When I returned back to Calgary, we immediately started on a few fundraising campaigns. My husband had just completed his first "solo" CD and he put on 3 shows and donated the proceeds to EVHS... In late June we had heard that 4 of our children had died through starvation, yet we had raised enough money to hire a trainer from Shanghai and get the program started for 3 months. I flew back to China to start training the trainer and the 10 local village women to become nannies. That in itself was difficult, as I don't speak Cantonese and of course no one would believe that I had

children of my own, and grandchildren, so they felt they had more experience, but we have managed to jump through that hurdle. There is still some push back when decisions are being made, but on the most part they are cooperating. When I flew home in July after the training, our trainer gave notice that she would only stay until the end of July, oh man, now we had to start again, but to our amazement we put out a request and a young man, Jason O'Shea, who had just returned from spending 3 years in China teaching English, said that he would like to apply for the trainer position. We could not offer much, but he said that he liked our Society and wanted to help out any way that he could, so we hired him and he flew to China the first of August. Jason also speaks fluent Mandarin, however in the southern part of China, where the orphanage is, they only speak Cantonese, but we have a local young man who is assisting Jason at the orphanage and together they have made a huge difference in the lives the children. They have been using their own money to supplement food because the government will only provide 1 medium size bowl of rice and a few grains of meat and diced vegetables to feed 16 children. The babies are now given fortified milk and not diluted powdered milk. We have gotten a new baby in the orphanage once a week, however, 4 of the ones that were in the orphanage before we came, we were not able to save them in time, It was a very difficult time for all having to deal with the deaths of these children.

We are still working on fundraising to keep Jason and Jian at the orphanage, the nannies, food and transportation costs covered. Our goal is have a full year in the bank before we embark upon our ecological, self-sustaining child care centre.

If you would like an update let me know. We are starting a newsletter and can put you on the mailing list." You can reach Renay at [fisheng1@telus.net](mailto:fisheng1@telus.net).



**Arnica Rowan** (2004 cohort) has had her first national magazine article published, in the Nov/Dec issue of [Unlimited Magazine](#). The piece is called: (REDWASHING) Will thousands of red iPods, T-shirts and cellphones really make the world a better place?

**Neal Klassen** (2005 cohort) wrote recently "...that Environmental Science and Engineering Magazine will publish a condensed version of my thesis in their November 2007 issue."



**Melissa Tupper** (2005 cohort) has recently become the Communications Coordinator, a new position with the World Wildlife Fund for Nature: British Columbia, in Vancouver.



**Thara Vayali** (2005 cohort) wrote a wonderful thesis exploring the emerging practice of eco-yoga. She wrote: “To continue my journey of respecting nature as teacher, in september I am beginning a four year program at the Boucher Institute of Naturopathic Medicine in Vancouver.

My mission to educate through nature, body, and soul is slowly piecing itself together! I'm grateful, because our MEEC program has really deepened my understanding of what it means to educate, and I feel I am entering into this ND (naturopathic doctor) program with a holistic perspective on wellness for both people and the planet. Thanks Rick for making this program what it is:)”

MEEC learners are doing wonderful things too...



**Nadine Lefort** (2005 cohort) has been hired to coordinate a \$157,000 project at Cape Breton University and the M'kmaq College Institute. “The focus will be on creating educational change through applications of Two-Eyed Seeing (TES) in

Teacher Education Programs. This is a unique project with implications for other regions of Canada, funded by Canadian Council on Learning (CCL)... Two-Eyed Seeing refers to bringing together Aboriginal and Western scientific knowledges and ways of knowing (or seeing) for the benefit of all, when using both these eyes together. This project examines Two-Eyed Seeing as an educational approach that includes multiple cultures and world

views and a goal to model and reflect sustainability... Drawing upon the experience and expertise of Cape Breton University, local educators, and Mi'kmaq Elders and educators, the project team will appropriately develop and disseminate a TES framework which would be incorporated into teacher education curriculum and challenge the current educational system.”



**Margie Amos** (2006 cohort) has made a major shift in her life, leaving Cape Breton for a stint in northern Quebec. She wrote: “After leaving residency, Lakelin (her son) and I took a trip to QC to visit a friend and relish in the having time to take on adventures, which was long overdue... Following this trip I was returning home to start working at the school,

move into a new little home and start rolling with thesis work, but for the time all of that has changed.

I thought this year, Lakelin's kindergarten year, meant the timing was perfect for us to take on a new adventure, also considering the flexibility of working on the thesis, we could do this from anywhere. So, I spoke with the school in hopes to not burn a bridge and decided to move to northern QC, into a small town called Amos :)

Within a week Lake and I turned our lives inside out and then took to the road for three days until we made it safely to Amos... I wanted to learn french for too long a time, so with the support from a close friend, Lake and I are now fully immersed into a thick french community and well on our way with our new tongues. I really have no idea what to expect. As for myself, I will teach english in a town 45 minutes from here. I am feeling I did the right thing, I am more than thrilled to have worked through an opportunity to live the perspective I would like to gain and to open opportunities for Lake at the same time.



**Souraya Mansour** (2006 cohort) left the residency in August and flew almost immediately to Beirut Lebanon, where she will be living and carrying out her thesis research. She wrote “ Life is immensely

different here as you can imagine. Im certainly not in Kansas anymore! I'm slowly adjusting to the

different mentality, way of dealing and the fact that everywhere I go, the chances of bumping into a relative are extremely high.

I have started working in AFDC (Association for Forest Development and Conservation). I am the project coordinator of the environmental education department. Environmental Education in NGOs is very new in Lebanon but in extremely high demand and it seems I came in the right time. They loved my thesis idea and they are fully supportive of implementing the survey in the schools here. In fact I will be meeting with a representative from the ministry of Education next week to discuss the plan for the upcoming academic year... AFDC has already established an EE office and has been working with schools but they were looking for someone new with a fresh perspective to push it forward and they seem to think I am the woman for the job. AFDC has a very professional ethic and has been working on the reforestation and conservation of Lebanon's greens...can you believe they found me and not the other way around! I'm excited to present my proposal today and brainstorm about how to plan the upcoming year."



**Paul Page** (2006 cohort) had something to do with his wife Andrea having a baby on 25 June. This just shows that doing a MA degree really doesn't take up all one's time!

### Fall 2007 Convocation

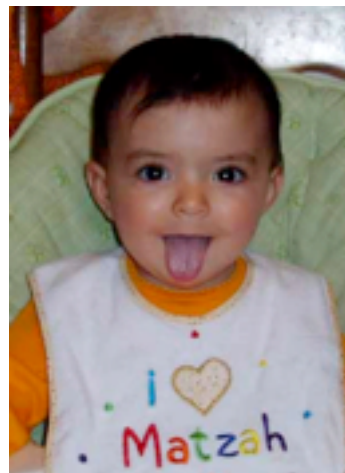


For a change, it didn't rain on the November Convocation. This was a special event for many of us, with a good representation of MEEC graduates and alumni present. It was also special as the new Chancellor of

the University is Peter Robinson, an RRU graduate, the CEO of Mountain Equipment Coop, and soon to be the Executive Director of the David Suzuki Foundation. We can expect to see an even stronger voice on behalf of the environment from the Board of Governors of RRU now that Peter is the Chair.

From the 2004 cohort, **Martin Scaia** and **Lillian Howard** received their degrees. Lillian came with her father *Ha'wilth* Barney Howard, her daughters and their friends, and relatives including Chief Mike Maquinna, the Tyee *ha'wilth* of the Mowachaht and Muchalaht First Nations.

Also crossing the stage were members of the 2005 cohort, including **Neal Klassen**, **Bruce Whyte**, **Stephanie Lynam**, **Laura Shaw**, **Meredith Hunt** and **Thara Vayali**. Missing from the celebration were **Melissa Tupper**, **Nick Stanger**, **Suzy Simonetti**, and we missed you all!



Send your news to me! I love to let the cohorts and alumni know what you're doing !

Dr. Jennifer Good's daughter, Ezri, is too cute... even when she is sticking her tongue out at us!



Sharon Ryan's daughter, Anna, is clearly identifying with her maternal heritage! You can't keep those Irish down!