

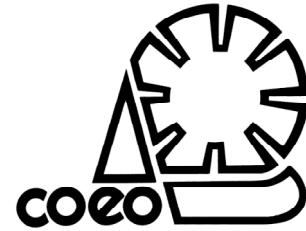
FRIENDS OF COEO NEWSLETTER

The Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario

www.coeo.org

Editor: Grant Linney

April 1, 2008



Please consider the environment before printing this newsletter.

ONTARIO GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENT re OEE

Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty and Education Minister Kathleen Wynne held a Queen's Park press conference yesterday afternoon to announce their government's plans for outdoor and experiential education (OEE). With a nod to John Ralston Saul's observation on the Ministry of Education website that *"We need more than ever to look at the public education system as the primary tool we have to ensure that children are able to grow up to become citizens,"* the pair announced plans to:

- Give formal recognition to OEE as a unique and powerful learning methodology. *"The time is long overdue,"* notes McGuinty, *"for our education system to provide specific credence to a direct, hands-on approach to learning that provides measurable, significant and lasting benefits to Ontario children in terms of ecological literacy, character development, wellbeing, and connections to a great variety of school curricula."*
- Provide funding that enables every elementary student in the province to experience a minimum of two one-day and one five-day OEE program at recognized OEE centres. Ms. Wynne noted that her government has decided to go beyond the final recommendation of last year's Report of the Working Group on Environmental Education. *"Their well-intentioned suggestion that the Ministry of Education seek funding for outdoor education through other provincial ministries does not reflect the reality of how governments operate, so my ministry will now provide the necessary funding."* She pointed out that this initiative would not include capital funding for the construction of new outdoor centres. *"We are confident that our school boards can make use of existing facilities run by other government agencies such as conservation authorities and by other organizations such as the YMCA and private camps."*
- Develop a comprehensive across-grades sequence of community-based outdoor activities that make use of naturalized schoolyards and local parks within walking distance of urban schools. Particular attention will be given to students from diverse cultures who might not be as inclined to spend time in outdoor settings.
- In recognition of the unique knowledge, skills and safety concerns required of outdoor educators, mandate that OEE be a recognized area of specialization at the Primary, Junior, Intermediate and Senior levels in all Ontario faculties of education. Ms. Wynne also stated, *"We shall continue to make good use of non-teachers with appropriate outdoor qualifications, but we also recognize the importance of trained outdoor education teachers both at outdoor centres and within local school settings. In addition, we will encourage parents to spend more time with their children in outdoor settings."*
- Actively encourage the postgraduate schools of Ontario universities to promote Canadian-based research into the multiple and lasting benefits of OEE.

COEO REACHES HISTORIC MEMBERSHIP HIGH

For the first time ever, COEO has reached a landmark high of 2,500 paying members.

“This is a very significant threshold,” notes current COEO President Shane Kramer. *“We can now afford to hire an Executive Assistant who can oversee the bulk of our day-to-day operations such as finances, correspondence, membership services, maintaining our web site, and seeking out special project funding opportunities. I am very excited that our volunteer Board members can move beyond the mundane tasks necessary to the functioning of our organization. They can now focus on big-picture planning and new directions that are of benefit to our membership as well as to the extended outdoor education community. We are also excited at the possibility of our being able to fund additional research within our field.”*

AND, NOW, A WORD ABOUT THE FOREGOING ...

Alas, it is April Fool's Day ... and the preceding two announcements are yet to become reality.

The Ontario government has not made any such announcements though, thanks to COEO's publication of “Reconnecting Children Through Outdoor Education,” we now have the research to warrant such steps.

COEO's current paying membership is at 186 individual and organizational members. Our newsletter (including the Friends of version) reaches over 400 people. ... if only everyone involved in OEE in Ontario actually joined COEO!

Please think of these possibilities.

Think of how desirable they are, and of what a difference their realization would make.

Think of how each one is within the realm of very real possibility.

And, then, think of what you can do to help make these possibilities real.

Because that's the only way that such things will happen.

Happy April dreaming (not fooling) ... and realizing that such dreams are indeed possible, with your help.

COEO Annual Conference 2008

Bringing
Us All
Together
An Algonquin Rendezvous

September
26 27 28



Together we learn best and grow strong. The rendezvous idea is for folks in the outdoor field to come together to celebrate our diversity and potential to learn from each other. Perhaps we are spread thin and work in isolation. COEO members are hoping to connect with a wide array of outdoor education practitioners and researchers.

We will draw out these connections by hosting a series of roundtable meetings as a special conference feature. Come and meet peers and colleagues and share in a dynamic conference program in an Algonquin site steeped in history and natural beauty.

Location: Camp Ahmek, Canoe Lake, Algonquin Park
Road Accessible

A list of presenters, conference highlights and registration information to follow in April



CAR POOLING TO THE CONFERENCE

Bryan Grimwood is overseeing arrangements for COEO members attending our next conference to reduce their carbon footprint through extensive carpooling. Stay tuned for more details in upcoming newsletters.

COEO's FACEBOOK GROUP

This virtual group is now 110+ members! If you already have a Facebook profile, search for "COEO Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario."

FOREST VALLEY CELEBRATION

Forest Valley Outdoor Education Centre, which began in 1967/68 in the North York Board of Education under the wonderful leadership of lifetime COEO member Lloyd Fraser, is celebrating its **40th anniversary** on Saturday April 12, 2008.

We know that many people have fond memories of Forest Valley and we'd love to hear from you. For more information about this, and/or if you would like to attend our Celebration/Reunion event, please send an e-mail to:

forestvalleyoutdooredcentre@tdsb.on.ca, or call Barb at (416) 395-5110.

Please share this information with others who might be interested.

UPCOMING P.D. OPPORTUNITIES

ADVENTUREWORKS!

Here is an update re organizational member Adventureworks and their many upcoming opportunities for high calibre OEE professional development.

For more details, go to www.adventureworks.org or call **877-311-5683**.

Course Name	Date	Location
Special Events		
Ropes Course Leadership Symposium	April 4	Canterbury Hills, Ancaster ON
Games Workshop	June 12	Trent University, Peterborough ON
"Teamwork & Teamplay" with Jim Cain	November 21	Norval Outdoor School, Norval ON
"Nuts & Bolts" with Jim Cain	November 22	Norval Outdoor School, Norval ON
Ropes Course		
Low Ropes Facilitator	May 14-16	Canterbury Hills, Ancaster ON
Assistant High Ropes Instructor	April 30-May 4	Camp Trillium, Waterford, ON
	May 7-11	Canterbury Hills, Ancaster ON
Ropes Course Instructor	April 7-11	Bark Lake, Irondale ON
	May 28-June 1	Canterbury Hills, Ancaster ON
Ropes Course Refresher	May 10	Canterbury Hills, Ancaster ON
Ropes Course Recertification Testing	May 11 (Level 1 & 2)	Canterbury Hills, Ancaster ON

WYE MARSH & NATIONAL WILDLIFE WEEK (April 7 to 13, 2008)

National Wildlife Week was created in honour of one of Canada's most influential naturalists, the late Jack Miner. Established by an Act of Parliament in 1947, the week provides Canadians with an opportunity to celebrate wildlife and take action to protect wild plants and animals. Join Wye Marsh naturalists over the course of the week for a series of daily workshops to educate the public on how they can contribute. Workshops will be conducted on: Trumpeter Swan Update, Bees Please, Tracking Furry Critters, Trees That Please, Make Recycled Bird Feeder, and Habitat Management.

Cost: Included with general admission, free for Wye Marsh members

Times: 1 to 3 pm Monday to Friday and 2 to 4 pm Saturday and Sunday

Go to the Wye Marsh web site (www.wyemarsh.com) to discover an extensive list of outdoor and experiential spring happenings at this Midland location.

OSEE ANNUAL CONFERENCE May 2 to 4, 2008

The Ontario Society for Environmental Education holds its annual conference at the Bark Lake Leadership Centre in the Haliburton area.

This year's theme is *"It all starts here."* This refers specifically to the implementation of the Environmental Education recommendations from the "Shaping our Schools, Shaping our Future" document put out by the Ministry of Education. It also refers more generally to inspiring and empowering educators to find new ways of incorporating environmental education into their lessons.

For more information, go to www.osee.org.

THE NEW AQ COURSE IN OEE: **CAN I HAVE A SHOW OF HANDS, PLEASE?**

The good news is that a new teacher's AQ course in Outdoor Experiential Education will soon be official ... on paper at least. The bad news is that Ontario's faculties of education (who need to sponsor such a course) are hesitant to offer OEE because, while successful completion would show up on your teacher's record, it cannot be used to raise one's salary category. The faculties thus feel that there will be very little interest in such a course.

Can we please prove them wrong?

By this April 15th, can you please send me an email indicating your interest in such a course as well as your hometown?

glinney1@coqeco.ca

HISTORIC CANOE JOURNEY

2008 is the 200th anniversary of David Thompson's cross-Canada trade route and several groups will be commemorating it by paddling from Rocky Mountain House, Alberta to Thunder Bay, Ontario.

Along the way there are about thirty communities planning to host the paddlers and helping organize celebration events. Needless to say, this is going to be a very unique event! Most paddlers will be dressed up in period clothing for the community arrival celebrations. Don McMurtry is paddling the entire distance and he's still looking for others who might be interested in joining one or more sections of the trip. Contact Don at donmcmurtry@gmail.com

The trip begins May 10th and ends July 13th. More details, including the list of specific communities and paddling dates are on the event website:

<http://www.2008thompsonbrigade.com/>

(Thanks to Friend of COEO Stephanie Foster for this item.)

RECOMMENDATION OF THE MONTH: ADDING YOUR VOICE TO THE FIGHT vs. CLIMATE CHANGE

The world's scientists are calling for immediate and urgent action on global warming. The good news is that we have the science, technologies and policies necessary to stop it. What's needed now is an increasingly widespread expression of concern and willingness to act by more and more concerned people like you and me.

One of the most effective ways to express this concern is to join Nobel Peace Prize winner Al Gore and his organization, <http://wecansolveit.org/alliance>. If leaders in business and government are going to make stopping climate change a real priority, we need to send a loud message that we want action now. This organization has just surpassed the symbolic million-member threshold. This is great news, but more can be done. Please add your voice, and let others know also. Please act now.

ANOTHER ACTION ITEM: SIGN THE GOOGLE MAPS BICYCLE PETITION

A group of cycling enthusiasts are asking Google Maps to incorporate bike travel as an equal option to automobile transportation and public transit. EEON list contributor (and Friend of COEO) Julie Johnston notes that this could be very cool and useful, especially given the new tracing algorithms that Google has recently implemented. If you're interested, please sign it and pass it on, especially to any cyclists you know.

<http://www.petitiononline.com/bikether/petition.html>

RESOURCES

CHECK OUT “ECOSANITY”

www.ecosanity.org

Here's a Canadian website that draws upon the resources of other organizations to promote the need for urgent action on climate change. The home page features a recent address by Green Party Leader Elizabeth May, as well as a summary of a landmark report by the Friends of the Earth called “Climate Code Red.” But there's more ... take some time and check it out. (Thanks again to EEON contributor Julie Johnston.)

NATIONAL GREEN EVENTS CALENDAR

There are many good and green things continuously going on out there and, if you would like to:

- find great events to attend
- get ideas for things to do in *your* community
- meet & collaborate with others who care about the same things you do
- make the leap from participant, to volunteer, to organizer
- promote your own event, and plan ahead to avoid date conflicts
- find your niche and make a difference...

visit: <http://planetfriendly.net/calendar/> on a regular basis.

Today's version lists over 300 events occurring across the country.

WWF YOUNG LEADERS FOR A LIVING PLANET

<http://wwf.ca/youth/>

The World Wildlife Fund Canada has started yet another website, this time with the above name and targeted to high school students who care about the state of our living planet and who wish to impact others. Current posted is a **footprint challenge** “that engages you and your friends in making a big difference to the health of the planet.

WORTH REPEATING?

(An article first written by Grant Linney for the April 2006 electronic newsletter and now slightly revised.)

EARTH DAY AND OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Over the past few years, COEO has reaffirmed that outdoor and experiential education is a learning process (not a subject area), and that OEE powerfully educates for environment, character, curriculum and wellbeing. We have also recognized the value

of our continuing as a distinct organization while at the same time collaborating on specific projects and initiatives with many other dedicated and capable groups.

In rearticulating these important but widely varying values, we run the risk of spreading ourselves too thin, of lacking a clear and driving focus. And, now, as I write this on Earth Day 2006, I realize that we cannot afford vagueness. At a time when scientists and other leading figures are increasingly sounding the alarm over major and immanent climate change (not to mention a host of other environmental issues brought about by our voracious and wasteful ways – we are the ultimate “invasive species” for the entire planet), we need to further clarify what we stand for. And, then, we need to clearly and loudly and repeatedly state – and base most if not all of our actions upon – this mission.

Among other things, we need to consider the following:

- The right of all children to have publicly-funded, safe, positive, educational and hands-on experiences in the outdoors. This is surely “square one” to the development of the kind of lifelong environmental ethic that our planet so desperately needs. The politically hot topic of “child care” needs to be changed to that of “planet care,” with the realization that the latter precedes the former ... and the latter should hugely influence the former.
- “All” children must include specific initiatives to actively engage all cultural and socio-economic sectors ... and a realization that this will in turn change COEO
- In advocating for children and outdoor education, we must reach out to and support current and future outdoor educators from all parts of Canadian society.
- In advocating for children and outdoor education, we must begin with the provision of hands-on experiences in the schoolyard and in neighbourhood parks, so that we leave the unmistakable message that the life support systems of this planet are all around us, and that our care for these fragile systems begins in the here and now, and in our own back yards.
- All outdoor educators must actively and continuously address “education for environment” ... just as all environmental educators must provide hands-on direct learning experiences in the outdoors.

ABOUT THIS ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER

The Friends of COEO electronic newsletter is available, blind-copied and at no charge, to those interested in OEE in Ontario. It does not include the OEE job postings usually found in the member’s monthly version of this letter.

If you would like to learn more about membership in COEO, please go to:

www.coeo.org/membership.htm