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# RCE Bulletin

R C E A N D E S D N E W S

## The RCE Conference of the Americas

*by Lyle A Benko & Roger Petry*

RCE Saskatchewan hosted the first RCE Conference of the Americas from 25-27 May 2008. The Conference was entitled Knowledge and Innovation for Sustainability: Assessing and Adopting Beneficial Practices. Funding was received from the Government of Saskatchewan's Green Initiatives Fund, partner universities, and non-governmental organisations. A diverse range of interests and needs was met by the conference including a discussion of models for self-evaluation by RCEs and for inter-regional networking. The conference focused on regional and inter-regional capacity building for ESD as well as the specific theme areas of RCE Saskatchewan—Climate Change; Health and Healthy Lifestyles; Reconnecting to Natural Prairie Ecosystems; Farming and Local Food Production, Consumption and Waste Minimization; Supporting and Bridging Cultures for Community Building and Sustainable Living, and Sustainable Infrastructure including Water and Energy.

The conference began on the evening of 25 May 2008, with over 260 people attending a public keynote address from Severn Cullis-Suzuki, recognised for her riveting speech as a young teenager at the U.N. Earth Summit in Rio 1992. There were over fifty additional presenters at the conference. The schedule included two pre-conference field-trips, plenary sessions, presentations in each ESD theme area, workshops, poster sessions and displays, and much opportunity for delegates to visit and network. Eighty-five delegates from the RCE Saskatchewan region and across the Americas attended the conference. All four of the Canadian RCEs were represented as well as RCEs from North Texas (USA) and Curitiba-Parana (Brazil).

At the close of the conference, delegates from RCE Montreal announced that Montreal would host the next RCE Conference of the Americas in May of 2009. Other conference highlights included unveiling the new logo for RCE Saskatchewan developed to create a sense of regional identity and assist in RCE promotion and recognition, presentations by RCE Saskatchewan's two flagship projects, and a presentation by the seven RCE student researchers

hired to conduct an inventory of ESD initiatives in the RCE Saskatchewan region.

The goals of the RCE Conference of the Americas were ambitious and reflected the range of needs and aspirations of participants, sought out in advance of the conference. At a grassroots level, the conference enabled showcasing and celebrating ESD projects with other RCEs, community organisations, the research community, the media, and the public. Participants wanted to learn about other RCEs with similar ESD theme areas and projects. At the same time, students and faculty were attracted to the conference by having formal opportunities to present their ESD research findings.

Organisationally, RCEs were able to explore their respective strengths and challenges while identifying new opportunities for growth. Specific sessions showcased RCEs to allow a more in-depth understanding of the regions represented as well as their organisational structures. This contributed to RCE capacity building in an important way as RCEs became aware of reasons why different organisations, such as academic, business, government, and NGOs, have an interest in ESD. By understanding the role RCEs can play in advancing these interests, RCEs could identify potential resources (financial and in-kind) available to ESD projects in their own regions and their RCE.

In addition to building capacity at a local and regional level, the RCE conference had focused discussion on how RCEs might network as a 'region of regions', in this case, within the Americas, and the value this scale of networking might have in contributing to the global UNU RCE initiative. Recognising the importance of having increased RCE participation in the success of the conference, financial support was provided by the Government of Saskatchewan to help subsidise participation of all RCEs from the Americas in attendance.

With the anticipated growth in the number of RCEs globally during the U.N. Decade of ESD, annual meetings of RCEs at a continental or hemispheric scale also provide greater room for showcasing RCE regions over time. Closer geographic proximity was viewed as potentially facilitating a mentoring model between better established RCEs and

those that are new and emerging. Finally, opportunities for networking as a 'region of regions' provide a further learning experiment given the distinctive forms of innovation and social capital generated at this geographic scale and subsequently sharable with other RCEs networking at a similar scale.

The conference intentionally integrated a diversity of ways of knowing and knowledge production for ESD within its schedule. It provided a space for theoretical reflection on what we mean by ESD in global and local contexts and for focused discussion on specific ESD theme areas grounded in the SD challenges of the region hosting the conference. Specific panels, poster sessions, and displays emphasized scientific knowledge, including a panel on the role of education in technological and social innovation for SD. An opportunity was also given for workshops, allowing sharing of tacit knowledge (or know-how) related to ESD topics proposed by participants. Extended breaks and celebratory events allowed for further networking and tacit-knowledge sharing. By accommodating a wide range of presenters, the conference enabled formal identification of ESD expertise available locally and internationally, especially within the RCE network. The conference gave participants an opportunity to learn through direct experience and observation, with early morning bird-walks, other nature walks, and pre-conference tours.



*Participants in a native prairie area*

Opportunity was also provided for spontaneous sharing of ideas through a large group wrap-up discussion and ongoing gathering of ideas from individuals in a variety of formats (paper, video, and website) during the course of the conference. The conference allowed for knowledge sharing through art and stories. The symbolism of the newly designed RCE Saskatchewan logo was explained and shared with participants through locally handcrafted materials incorporating the logo. The keynote speaker, Severn Cullis-Suzuki, shared her life journey speaking about the formative experiences supporting her current

environmental leadership. The conference was formally closed by Joseph Naytowhow, an aboriginal storyteller, sharing a heartfelt story, song, and prayer.

By documenting as much of the conference as possible, it is hoped the first RCE Conference of the Americas might provide a source of ideas and models for other such conferences. Further information about the conference including the final schedule of presenters, presentations, photos, fieldtrip information, and evaluations are being posted on the RCE Saskatchewan conference website: <http://www.saskrce.ca/conference2008/> Other materials are available on the RCE Saskatchewan website: [www.saskrce.ca](http://www.saskrce.ca)

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### Third International RCE Conference

The 3<sup>rd</sup> International RCE Conference was held from 2-4 July in Barcelona, Spain, providing an opportunity for RCEs to discuss activities and challenges in development. Transversal issues such as communications, monitoring, evaluation and reporting were discussed formally for the first time and working group sessions for thematic networks and at the continental level were held. A full report of the conference will be published in the next issue of the RCE bulletin.

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### Developing and testing an ESD coordination tool

A five-day expert consultation was held from 9-13 June, at the UNESCO office in Bangkok, to discuss a common programming and coordination tool to identify core components of ESD projects and produce a first template for qualitative analysis of curriculum and learning change. The analytical tool is expected to assist in defining a focus for ESD programming, coordination and assessment and to provide a basic framework for inputs for the ESD mid-decade conferences to be held in Japan and Germany in December 2008 and early-2009 respectively.

Following the expert consultation, the tool was discussed at an ESD coordination workshop held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan from 17-19 June. The response from participants, who included representatives from Ministries of Environment, Ministries of Education, RCE Kyrgyzstan, academia and civil society, was positive. Participants agreed that ESD should be prioritised in the region and that the Decade of ESD should be promoted. Furthermore, participants noted the need for a clear focus on relevant thematic priorities in the national context; clear instructions to move the

coordination forward; analysis of current documents (policies, action plans), finances and activities to identify gaps; and the need for ESD to go beyond the education sector to acknowledge cross-sectoral linkages, especially linkages between education and science.

**For more information on the coordination tool**

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**For more information on ESD and RCE's in Central Asia**

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## Sustainable development workshop in Munich

A workshop on 'Tools for Sustainable Development' was organised by RCE Munich on 6 and 7 June. The facilitator of the event was Dennis Meadows, author of 'Limits to Growth'. Through action-learning, thirty participants learnt about systems thinking, team building and networks. The RCE hopes to evaluate the results of the workshop over the next few weeks.

**For more information**

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## Sustainable Health group meets in Penang

In May, RCE Penang held a meeting of the Sustainable Health thematic group, at which representatives of the RCE's of Penang, the Pacific, Yokohama, Cebu, and candidate RCE's Copenhagen and Mbarara, discussed challenges and opportunities, ways to identify partners and explored resources for programme support. Common joint projects were also discussed.

In other activities, RCE Penang's White Coffin campaign is encouraging students to take action against the use of polystyrene-based containers (a petrochemical material widely used in food packaging) on campus at the Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). The ultimate goal of the campaign is to develop an understanding of sustainable development principles among students by getting them involved in an awareness campaign on the impact of these containers on the environment. USM students are now expected to bring their own food containers or use biodegradable containers. The programme has received much support and praise from the outside community and is an example of the university taking the lead in promoting environmental sustainability.

**For more information**

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## Incheon's Grove of Hope in Mongolia

Incheon's Grove of Hope in Mongolia is a long-term project organised by a union of local NGO's called the Incheon Environment Round Table, a member of RCE Incheon. In an effort to minimise damage caused by yellow dust, a total of seventy-six students, local companies, NGO's, media and government participated in planting trees from 13-17 May in Mongolia where the dust originates. The Incheon delegation, together with the citizens and students of Bayanuur, Mongolia, planted 2,500 poplars to help the city become greener.



*Tree planting in Mongolia*

Yellow dust is a seasonal meteorological phenomenon which affects East Asia in spring. The dust originates from the deserts of Kazakhstan, Mongolia and northern China where high-speed surface winds and intense dust storms kick up dense clouds of dry soil particles. These clouds are then carried eastwards. In the last decade, this has become a serious problem due to the increase of industrial pollutants contained in the dust and intensified desertification in China, causing longer and more frequent occurrences. (Source: Wikipedia)

**For more information**

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## Side event on RCEs in Africa during CSD-16

UNU-IAS in cooperation with the Ministry of the Environment, Japan, UNDESA, UNESCO, UNEP and UNCSD Education Caucus, organised a side event on RCEs for Sustainable Development in Africa on 8 May 2008 at the UN headquarters in New York during CSD-16 (16th Session of UN Commission on Sustainable Development), as one of the main themes of CSD-16 is Africa. Jim Taylor from RCE KwaZulu-Natal, Dr. Timothy Mmella from the Kenyan

Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Santosh Khatri from UNESCO, P. J. Puntenney from the UN CSD Education Caucus and Yoshihiro Natori from UNU-IAS discussed how RCEs can contribute to sustainable development in Africa. There were over forty interested participants.

**For more information**  
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## Open day at RCE Graz-Styria

The RCE Graz-Styria organised a 'Day of Open Doors' on 5 June 2008 at the Department of Geography and Regional Science, Graz University. The aim of the event was for the RCE's partners to provide information about their activities as well as those of the RCE's. The event gave the organisations the opportunity to get in touch with a network of stakeholders at university and from external society. The day's programme included poster presentations, organic food tasting, interactive workshops and open discussions.

**For more information**  
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**RCE Graz-Styria**  
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## Side Event on RCEs in Africa during TICAD IV

UNU-IAS organised a side event entitled 'Education for Sustainable Development: Focus on Regional Centres of Expertise in Africa' on 28 May 2008 in Yokohama, Japan, as one of the official TICAD IV (The Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development, 28-30 May 2008, Yokohama, Japan) side events. Yoshihiro Natori introduced the concept of RCEs and their activities in Africa. A video produced by RCE Greater Nairobi was also shown to about thirty participants. The role and importance of RCEs for sustainable development in Africa was highlighted at the event.

**For more information**  
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## Students in Newcastle discuss ESD

Students from Newcastle, UK, had the opportunity to discuss various aspects of sustainable development pertaining to their lives at a conference co-organised by RCE North East on 26 June 2008. Education for Sustainable Development was one of the several topics on which workshops were organised. At the workshop, Dr. Aidan Doyle from RCE North East helped participants explore the rift between

prevalent 'Cultures of Consumption' and "environmental self-righteousness".



*An interactive session at the conference*

The Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, the organiser of the conference, is the lead body in England supporting school improvement through a programme of curriculum specialisms. SSAT in the North East of England has a membership that includes all secondary school and a significant number of special and primary schools.

**For more information**  
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## Training session at COP 9

A training session on Business, Biodiversity and Challenges was held as part of the Business and Biodiversity Forum co-organised by UNU-IAS and UNEP (DELIC) at the COP 9 in Bonn on 24 May.

The purpose of the training was to provide an understanding of how businesses approach business, biodiversity and ethical issues using a real case study of an iron-ore mining project in Guinea. The event began with a presentation on corporate sustainability strategies, their business rationale with specific emphasis on business opportunities to contribute to conservation and sustainable and equitable use of biodiversity. Participants formed two groups and analysed various facets of the project including identification of the sustainability issues related to the case study, links of these issues to risks and opportunities for the company, development of practical strategies to mitigate impacts of the project on biodiversity and availability and quality of ecosystem services. Each of the group discussion sessions was followed by interactive sessions with experts.

The event was one of the first capacity development exercises on the private sector and biodiversity within COP.

The training was led by Dr. Zinaida Fadeeva and Dr. Rene

van Berkel representing UNU-IAS. Other resource persons included Dr. Joshua Bishop (IUCN), Dr. Mikkail Kalliso (World Business Council on Sustainable Development) and Dr. Suneetha Subramanian (UNU-IAS).

**For more information**  
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## Malmö's ESD initiative starts up

About a hundred guests met at the Environment Department in Malmö for the launch of the city's ESD initiative on 25 April. One of the first actions of the Environment Department has been to produce a publication on good examples of learning for sustainable development, initiatives and actors that contribute to knowledge on building a sustainable society by moving from words to action.



The publication is only available in Swedish at the moment. The contents in English or French can be requested from Åsa Hellström, Environmental teacher at the Environment Department in Malmö. The book can be downloaded from [www.malmo.se/miljo](http://www.malmo.se/miljo) in pdf format.

The City of Malmö and Malmö University are partners of RCE Skåne.

**For more information**  
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## Youth exchange to promote sustainability

Margaret Wanjeri, a recent intern from Kenya at RCE Graz-Styria, says that following her internship, she is very motivated to start a Sustainability Award in Kenya that would recognise the contribution of corporate organisations, NGOs and educational institutions to sustainable development. RCE Greater Nairobi has shown positive interest in partnering the award, says Wanjeri. The

internship was facilitated by RCE Graz-Styria, in partnership with AIESEC-Austria and AIESEC-Kenya. AIESEC is a global network that facilitates youth exchange.

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## Activities of RCE Bogor

RCE Bogor's coordinator was invited to participate as a resource person at the Indonesian Ministry of National Education's Roundtable Discussion held on 17 April, on the theme of ESD in Indonesia. At the discussion, representatives from SEAMEO (the South East Asian Ministers of Education Organisation, a chartered international organisation) countries, the Indonesian government and universities concluded that raising awareness of ESD should be implemented in the school curriculum.

The RCE organised a training on organic products on 28 and 29 May for twenty-five participants ranging from teachers to representatives from the NGO and private sectors. The training is the first of a series that will be held through the year. Another recent activity of RCE Bogor was a seminar in June for seventy participants, focusing on reusing plastic bags and newspapers to produce handicrafts.

**For more information**  
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 RCE Bogor  
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## ProSPER.Net launched

ProSPER.Net, an alliance of renowned higher education institutions in the Asia-Pacific region, was officially launched on 21 June 2008, in Sapporo, Japan, in conjunction with Hokkaido University's *Sustainability Weeks 2008 – G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit Round* celebratory activities leading to the G8 Summit in July this year. The network's first board meeting and general assembly were also held at the time.

Speaking at the launch, Mr. Shinichi Goto, Ministry of the Environment of Japan, emphasised the significance of university networks for developing future leaders in business, government and technology in the Asia-Pacific region and stated the determination of the Ministry of the Environment to support ProsperNet.

More information on the network is available at [www.ias.unu.edu/efsd/prospernet](http://www.ias.unu.edu/efsd/prospernet).

**For more information**  
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## Applications invited for Young Scientist Award in Sustainable Development

The ProSPER.Net-Scopus Young Scientist Award in Sustainable Development is given annually to recognise outstanding young scientists who have made significant contributions to the area of sustainable development. In the first year the award will be given in the area of Business.

The award is open to candidates, forty years of age or under, actively engaged in graduate education and research and employed at institutions in the Asia-Pacific region.

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**More details available at [www.ias.unu.edu/efsd/prospernet](http://www.ias.unu.edu/efsd/prospernet)**

## Call for papers for ESD Journal

CEE (Centre for Environment Education), India requests RCEs to submit case studies for its peer-reviewed Journal of Education for Sustainable Development (JESD). The bi-annual journal is published in English.

**Contact: [jesd@ceeindia.org](mailto:jesd@ceeindia.org)**  
**[www.ceeindia.org/cee/callpaper.html](http://www.ceeindia.org/cee/callpaper.html)**

## Ideas and sponsors for Education and Sustainability magazine

The next issue of RCE Barcelona's Education and Sustainability magazine will focus on cities. Ideas and images are welcome. RCE Barcelona is now looking for sponsors or organisations interested in supporting the magazine to be able to distribute to teachers more widely.

The previous issue of the magazine, focusing on Water, is now available for download at [www.rce-barcelona.net](http://www.rce-barcelona.net). The magazine is available in Spanish, Catalan and English. Four thousand printed copies of the magazine in Spanish and Catalan have been distributed to primary and secondary schools, university libraries, public libraries, city councils, teaching resource centres, environmental education centres and other informal learning organisations in Catalunya and other parts of Spain.

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**For individual subscriptions contact [es@rce-barcelona.net](mailto:es@rce-barcelona.net)**

## Conference - Architecture and Tourism: their role in sustainable development

*Samara, Russia, 15-17 September 2008*

The conference on the role of architecture and tourism in sustainable development is organised by RCE Samara with partners. Discussion topics include town-planning for tourism development, architecture as the basis of tourism infrastructure, sustainability of tourism, multicultural and multinational aspects of tourism, among others.

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## Call for papers: Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Conference for the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education

*Macao, PR China, 24-26 September 2008*

APEID-UNESCO Bangkok and the Government of the Macao SAR of the People's Republic of China are convening the Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Conference for the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education. The Preparatory Conference will provide a forum for discourses and debates on the rapidly changing higher education and research agendas in the Asia-Pacific region under the theme of 'Facing Global and Local Challenges: the New Dynamics for Higher Education.'

The sub-themes of the Conference to guide the discussions are:

- \* Societal commitment and social responsibility of higher education
- \* Research and innovation
- \* Trends and issues re-shaping higher education
- \* Towards a new agenda

The Conference will bring together representatives from governments, educational institutions, non governmental organizations, the private sector and local communities.

**Deadline for registration is 15 September 2008.**

**For more information:**

**[www.unescobkk.org/education/apeid/macao2008](http://www.unescobkk.org/education/apeid/macao2008)**

## Conference on Environmental Management for Sustainable Universities

*Barcelona, Spain, 15-17 October 2008*

EMSU is an international conference series which aims to share sustainability practice in universities. EMSU 2008 is the fifth edition and aims to generate debate on the role of knowledge in five key areas of environmental and social change: climate change and resource scarcity, production and consumption patterns, governance and changing responsibilities, poverty reduction and equality, and urban systems. The conference will be hosted by the Technical University of Catalonia. RCE Barcelona is seeking RCE's with an interest in Universities and Sustainability to participate in this process.

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**EMSU Website: [www.emsu.org](http://www.emsu.org)**

## 12th UNESCO-APEID Conference

*Nonthaburi, Thailand, 8-11 December 2008*

Papers are invited from RCEs in Asia-Pacific for presentation at the 12th UNESCO-APEID conference. The theme of the conference is "Quality Innovations for Teaching and Learning", and UNU-IAS plans to organise a session on the sub-theme-Reorienting Teacher Education for Sustainable Development. The sub-theme covers such issues as:

- Pedagogy for sustainable development
- Addressing sustainable development priorities through content
- Values and ethics education

- Climate change

Preference will be given to papers on innovative ideas, research, best practices or lessons learned. The papers should be original and reflect a real-life project or activity of RCEs.

Please submit a 200-word abstract of your paper to the [rceservicecentre@ias.unu.edu](mailto:rceservicecentre@ias.unu.edu) by 8 August 2008. On notification of acceptance, presenters must submit the full paper by **15 November 2008**.

**Contact:** [rceservicecentre@ias.unu.edu](mailto:rceservicecentre@ias.unu.edu)  
**More information on the conference is available at**  
<http://www.unescobkk.org/education/apeid/conference>

## UNESCO World Conference on ESD

*Bonn, Germany, 31 March-2 April 2009*

As the DESD approaches its mid-point, the "World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development – Moving into the Second Half of the UN Decade" will be held in Bonn, Germany, from 31 March to 2 April 2009. Organisers of the conference are UNESCO and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, in cooperation with the German Commission for UNESCO.

The conference will provide a platform for dialogue and advocacy on Education for Sustainable Development at the global level, involving some 700 participants from all regions representing UNESCO Member States, UN agencies, civil society organisations, youth and the private sector.

The World Conference on ESD will pursue four main objectives:

1. To highlight the essential contribution of ESD to all of education and to achieving quality education
2. To promote international exchange on ESD
3. To carry out a stock-taking of DESD implementation
4. To develop strategies for the way ahead

The 700 participants will reflect the nature of the DESD as a multi-stakeholder undertaking and will range from:

- representatives nominated by UNESCO Member States;
- representatives and individual experts invited by the organisers, in particular from civil society;
- participants selected through an open process of application (starting October 2008).

**Initial enquiries:** [esddecade@unesco.org](mailto:esddecade@unesco.org)  
**Website:** [www.desd.org](http://www.desd.org)

## 5th World Environmental Education Congress

*Montreal, Canada, 10-14 May 2009*

The topic of this congress, 'Earth, our common home', invites participants to contribute to the most important project of our humanity: to learn to live better the Earth, developing an earthly fraternity within our Oikos, this 'house' divided between the humans and the other forms of life. The congress will explore links between ecology, economy and écosophism, and consider how environmental education can help link these three dimensions of our relationship with the world.

The general objectives of the Congress are to highlight and to stimulate:

- the role of environmental education in the search for meaning and human identity;
- the contribution of environmental education to social innovation; and
- the contribution of environmental education in the development of public policy.

**Contact:**  
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