

RCE Saskatchewan Award Application

Short Description of the RCE Saskatchewan ESD Recognition Program

The RCE Saskatchewan ESD Recognition Program has been recognizing local individuals and organizations for their work on ESD projects since 2008. These individuals and organizations are formally recognized at recognition events held annually across Saskatchewan. In addition to receiving awards (a framed certificate as shown in the attachment), recipients are invited to speak briefly about their projects and attend a networking gathering in the afternoon to discuss upcoming recognition events and sustainable development directions in Saskatchewan as a whole. Often various public media agencies (including local television and newspaper outlets) will report on these recognition events to the local community. In addition, the RCE Saskatchewan website contains a photo gallery of each event. The recognition event demonstrates outstanding ways that groups in the province are excelling in sustainability initiatives and also provides a place for relationship-building between organizations that allows them to do further work on education for sustainable development.

The annual recognition events are supported by a number of financial sponsors, volunteers, and other groups and are attended by more than 50 people each year. Since the first recognition event in 2008, the RCE has celebrated the significant accomplishments of approximately 80 groups including school classes, university groups and administrative units, non-profit organizations, citizen owned corporations, businesses, and local governments, for example.

Each RCE Saskatchewan ESD Recognition Event has been a success through having projects themselves showcase their accomplishments in working to make the environment, economy, and society a better place in their communities. Unlike traditional competitive award structures where there were only a few winners, the RCE pioneered an approach that provided broad based recognition to projects able to meet community generated ESD criteria. Participants have remarked on feeling a renewed energy for their projects and sustainability in general and an enthusiasm to connect with other groups with a common vision of a sustainable future for their region. Guest speakers and sponsors have noted their excitement emerging from their new awareness of the sustainability projects that are happening around the province. The enthusiasm, dedication and eagerness to teach others shown by the award recipients and the continued support of the event

sponsors and partners demonstrates the passion to move Saskatchewan towards a sustainable future.



Participants of the 2012 RCE Recognition Event



Lunch at the 2012 RCE Recognition Event catered by 'The Willow on Wascana' Restaurant



The Peacock Learning Garden (award recipient) displayed information about their project at the 2012 Recognition Event

Description of the context in which the projects/programmes were undertaken

The first *RCE Saskatchewan ESD Recognition Event* was held on November 20, 2008 at the Craik Eco-Centre in Craik, Saskatchewan. Craik was a suitable host for the first recognition event as the community had undertaken many sustainable initiatives through the *Craik Sustainable Living Project*. Since then, the Recognition Event has been held in a different community each year with preference given to smaller communities outside the Province's two larger centres. The 2009 Recognition Event was held at the Multipurpose Complex in the city of Humboldt in December of that year. The RCE did not hold a recognition event in the winter of 2010 opting, due to participant requests, to push the next event to the summer of 2011 to encourage more people to attend the event. The next event was then held at the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST) Palliser Campus in the city of Moose Jaw on June 16, 2011. The Wascana Centre in Regina hosted the 2012 RCE Saskatchewan ESD Recognition Event that complemented their 50 year anniversary.

Since the first Recognition Event in 2008, over 80 projects have received recognition. The Recognition Program is structured such that any applicant that meets the criteria for the award can receive an award as opposed to a program where there is only one winner in various categories. The RCE felt this was an appropriate choice as many groups were doing important work that was valuable in so many different ESD issue areas and on so many different organizational and geographic scales. This type of program would therefore include a broad range of ESD projects. To receive a recognition award, applicants must demonstrate that their projects meet the following criteria:

- build capacity for ESD in Saskatchewan;
- educate others (formally, informally, or non formally) about the importance of becoming more sustainable;
- take place, at least in part, in Saskatchewan;
- have achieved significant milestones at the time of the application;
- have not been recognized at prior RCE Recognition events or, if previously recognized, have had further innovations and significant accomplishments since the earlier recognition event.

Projects that do not meet these criteria in a given year often further their work and re-apply for the program in following years. As part of the application process, projects are encouraged to provide

details related to the following criteria that were generated by the RCE in consultation with its community and organizational partners at the time the Recognition Program was developed:

- Level of community involvement including involvement of those often excluded from decision-making (for example, youth involvement)
- Contributions to community improvements that benefit a large number of people and/or disadvantaged/marginalized/vulnerable individuals, groups, and/or populations.
- Ways in which project participants (for example, volunteers) are encouraged to participate and are recognized
- Enabling of mitigation and adaptation
- Contributions to preserving or restoring natural ecosystems
- Specific results/accomplishments and measurable successes of your project
- Transformative educational dimensions of your project including formal education (for example, in schools, colleges, technical institutes, universities), non-formal education (for example, non-profit awareness programs, corporate or professional training), and/or informal education (for example, the media)
- Dimensions showing good organizational policies and practices and ways of sharing this expertise with others
- New knowledge and innovations including those associated with your project's implementation in a specific organizational or community setting

The groups that receive recognition awards vary greatly between and within each year. The following are just a few examples of groups that have received recognition awards: post-secondary institutions, school classes and extra-curricular programs for school-aged children, businesses, urban planners, community gardens, urban fruit sharing programs, municipal governments, science centre programs, and wilderness trails. These groups have worked on projects ranging from oil recycling programs and solar fairs to community health programs and students helping students abroad. In 2012, the RCE was particularly pleased to receive applications from the administrative levels of the University of Regina, the University of Saskatchewan, and SIAST . Each institution received an award for their respective sustainability committees at senior management levels. The RCE felt that it was important to have representation from these post-secondary education

institutions as they are leading educators in our province. The event provided a venue for representatives from these organizations to connect and discuss sustainable development in the context of higher learning throughout the event.



Youth from St. Catherine School and St. Josephat School receive an award for their oil recycling program



Marine Perran receives an award for Corporate Social Responsibility Launch at SIAST

At the event, rather than having RCE representatives speak about the projects, each recipient is given an opportunity to present (3-5 minutes) about their project and sustainability issues that their projects address. This is one of the most powerful portions of the event. Through the individual presentations it is easy to see the enthusiasm that the groups have for ESD and their dedication to teaching others about its importance. At the 2012 Recognition Event, recipients generated an enthusiasm for sustainable development that resonated through the theatre with every presentation. Because there is a common focus on education between the projects, each project is able to learn from the others, even if they are working in very different areas of sustainable development. This, in turn, creates energy, enthusiasm, and a sense of common purpose that helps advance sustainable development in the province.

Main partners and their roles

The annual RCE Saskatchewan ESD Recognition Event would not be possible without the support of a number of organizations. The Recognition Event planning committee has appreciated the support of a number of financial and in-kind sponsors (as shown on the 2012 RCE Recognition Event Agenda) . The planning committee itself has been composed primarily of individuals from its Higher Education partners including Luther College, SIAST, and the University of Saskatchewan.

This dedicated team of individuals consist mainly of volunteers and hires a part-time program coordinator. The committees are involved in planning the logistics of the event and making decisions regarding the venue and food, sponsorships, advertising, adjudication, creation of certificates, and updating the Recognition Event portion of the RCE Saskatchewan website. The planning committee meets regularly for 3 to 4 months before the event to plan logistics and again after the event to discuss outcomes and make recommendations for future events.

The recognition events are funded by several financial and in-kind sponsors. Once per year, the recognition event planning committee approaches several organizations for financial support. In 2012, over 40 organizations were contacted for sponsorship. These groups included post-secondary educational institutions, province owned corporations, municipal governments, financial institutions, insurance and other businesses and cooperatives. Each year, the RCE has been fortunate to be supported by several of these institutions that provide the main funding for the recognition events.

This year (2012), the RCE was fortunate to receive major sponsorship from the Wascana Centre Authority in Regina the organization that manages the large urban park in the city of Regina (see <http://www.wascana.sk.ca/>). Their generosity allowed the RCE to have the event in a great location and in conjunction with Wascana Centre's 50 year anniversary. The "Willow on Wascana", a nearby restaurant, provided coffee services for the morning snack and lunch using locally sourced ingredients while accommodating for participants with special dietary needs.

As with many RCE activities, Luther College at the University of Regina helped with the administration of the Recognition Event. In particular, they have provided accounting services for the event by preparing invoices, paying the deposit and final payments for the venue, and receiving and receipting sponsorship payments. They also have handled room bookings for the Recognition Event planning meetings (providing meeting spaces to the RCE at no cost), handled the setup and functioning of the technology to have the planning meetings via Skype (thereby minimizing the carbon footprint of holding the meetings), and provided website support. The SIAST Wascana Campus was also involved in the Recognition Event particularly in helping design and print the award certificates.

Sending out invitations to the regional community asking potential applicants to consider applying for the award takes a lot of time and energy. In 2012, The Saskatchewan Teacher's Federation published the call for nominations for the recognition event in the *STF Bulletin*, their

provincial newsletter. The STF ran the information in the bulletin as an article at no cost to the RCE. Past recipients, past and current sponsors, environmental organizations, government ministries, school administrators, teachers, post-secondary education administrators, professors and the general public were informed about the Recognition Event through mass emails, listservers at the U of R, U of S and SIAST, and the RCE Saskatchewan website (www.saskrce.ca).

The ESD Recognition Events are attended by more than 50 people each year including guest speakers, recognition award recipients, members of the RCE, and the public. Guest speakers at the events have, for example, included representatives from the host venues, government officials, and event sponsors. The RCE was fortunate to have two special guests in attendance at the 2012 Recognition Event: Professor Charles Hopkins, holder of the UNESCO Chair at York University and Gerry Connelly, Co-Director of the Sustainability and Education Academy at York University.



Guest speech delivered by Prof. Charles Hopkins

Contribution of your project (300 words)

☒ What according to you is the most innovative aspect of your case study? (E.g. learning, technology, knowledge, etc.)

The non-competitive nature of the award means that both individuals and larger institutions can be recognized for their own achievements in ESD. The public awareness and recognition that comes with the award is increasingly valued in the community.

☒ In which area has your project contributed the most (entrepreneurship, local/regional community empowerment, sustainable lifestyle, development of sustainable livelihoods, development of green/sustainable skills, better integration of production and consumption, development of alternative market option, better value education, etc.)? Please explain how, if necessary, with examples.

The RCE Recognition Program provides recognition of achievement in the formal, informal, and non-formal approaches to teaching ESD. To date, projects have been recognized in all of the above areas, though principally, the projects have demonstrated the capacity of their respective communities to generate sustainable livelihood options and promote sustainable lifestyles (a central goal of RCE Saskatchewan since its inception).

☒ What is the unique long-term sustainability element(s) in your case?

This program operates each year (since 2008) and encourages individuals and organizations to continue to strive toward greater understanding of the importance of ESD. Projects are encouraged to apply within the 7 central areas of focus of ESD of RCE Saskatchewan (though they are not restricted to these areas):

- climate change
- health and healthy lifestyles
- farming and local food production, consumption, and waste minimization
- reconnecting to natural prairie ecosystems
- supporting and bridging cultures for sustainable living and community building
- sustainable infrastructure including water and energy
- building sustainable communities

In terms of the Recognition Program itself, its unique long-term sustainability, has been to generate a program that is able to sustain itself, drawing increasing volunteer and financial sponsorship year after year. With relatively modest support, the program has had a tremendous impact in formally recognizing projects that would not otherwise be recognized while building important awareness and social capital in our region that cuts across organizational and community boundaries.

☒ What, according to you, are the critical factors that made your project successful?

The culture of the province of Saskatchewan is one with a general willingness to openly share successful and innovative approaches to ESD with others. At the same time there is a general interest by the public to learn what is happening in their community that advances ESD and take part in its future development. Having the recognition program move to a different community each year has allowed different communities and hosting organizations to showcase themselves and their own sustainable development work while not exhausting the community and volunteer support in that community.

☒ What, according to you, is a critical governance element that made your project successful

Collaboration between various post-secondary institutions to work together in planning and executing the recognition event has enabled a core competency to emerge along with legitimizing the structure of the recognition program. This is further enhanced by the programs being conducted through the RCE.

☒ Are there any ethical, socio-cultural, political or economic dilemmas? If yes, how have they been addressed?

Award applicants must meet a minimum level of achievement in their programs and projects need to be completed or nearly completed. Abstract intentions to engage in ESD are rejected, and invited to re-apply once important tangible milestones have been reached. This reflects the view that successful ESD typically involves learning by doing.

☒ What are the major institutional barriers that you have had to face and how have they been addressed?

The RCE required funding to host the first Recognition Event but found it difficult to convince organizations to initially provide financial sponsorship. Potential sponsors were cautious about sponsoring the event because it was a new event with many unknowns and risks and they were unsure of how sponsorship would benefit them. The RCE was fortunate to receive enough funding from the Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment Go Green Fund for the entire 2008 Recognition Event. Once the RCE had received this support and a successful event had been completed, other organizations were more willing to support future recognition events.

☒ What are the major actions that would enable similar activities to grow in scope, scale or impact? Please elaborate.

The RCE is considering promoting each recognition event and project recognized through a video recording and posting this on YouTube. The RCE Saskatchewan website (www.saskrce.ca) contains a summary of the most recent annual recognition event along with a photo gallery of all previous events. This website URL should appear on the website of each award recipient (if they have a website) so that the individual award and the program itself can be promoted on the Internet for greater awareness and to encourage a greater diversity of applicants to apply in future years.

For further information on the RCE Saskatchewan ESD Recognition Program please visit our website at: <http://www.saskrce.ca/RecognitionProgram>.

Attachments:

Example of Certificate

2012 RCE Saskatchewan ESD Recognition Event Program with 2012 Recognition Event Sponsors

List of 2012 Recognition Event Recipients