

'What we Heard' at the 24 May 2007 Summit on Environmental Education

Background: Environment Minister Rob Renner opened this full-day event, which was attended by over 80 participants. Participants spent most of their time in small discussion groups that were facilitated by staff from Alberta Municipal Affairs and Housing. Groups were asked to examine the final version of 'A Framework to Advance Environmental Education in Alberta,' prepare their commitments to help deliver on the Framework, and come to consensus on the answers to several key questions. Their responses were recorded by both these facilitators and by previously appointed resource people. The full binder of this information is available upon request. The following summarizes and captures the common themes that emerged from the six groups' responses; the groups' 46 separate commitments are also listed below.

How will you and your group benefit from the Framework? What does payback look like for you?

- Supports our organization's mission
- Allows our group to better understand the larger context in which we work
- Helps our program grow
- Helps create active citizens
- Allows more consistent and uniform messaging
- Helps us (as a community) to better engage stakeholders

Which aspects of the Framework have the greatest potential to advance environmental education in Alberta?

- The aspect of EE stakeholders working together, speaking with a common voice, developing a common language, and effectively sharing information
- The potential to have more effective advocacy, both in support of EE and in our society in general
- The promotion of professional development at all levels
- The various activities of ACEE as it provides support for EE stakeholders
- All six medium term outcomes are important, linked, and synergistic
- Outcome #6 ('society and public policy increasing values, supports, and implements EE') is an overarching 'end goal'
- Potential to build leadership capacity among youth

What additional resources will your organization need to deliver on the commitment you are making today?

- More professional development
- Funding
- ACEE will need to play a key facilitating role, promote networking and communication, and ensure dissemination of information and contacts
- ACEE should strive to become recognized and supported by government
- Top-down support would help (i.e. legislation and political will)

How can ACEE help you deliver on this commitment?

ACEE should...

- Serve as a clearinghouse and broker of information about EE organizations, their programs, and their Framework commitments
- Connect and support networks of people who work in similar regions or topic areas
- Plan professional development for EE practitioners on key topics (evaluation, guidelines, EE research, best practices)
- Create an environmental education 'brand' in society
- Help sustain the sense of momentum
- Reinforce the urgency of the environmental crisis, and promote the role of EE in achieving positive action by citizens to help the environment take on an advocacy role to champion EE
- Be a galvanizing force
- Obtain funding for these initiatives
- Facilitate discussions and networking
- Advocate for more EE content at teacher training institutions
- Establish clear priorities in a multi-pronged approach

Given what needs to happen, what would you suggest is critically important to do, immediately, or in the next 6 to 18 months?

- Approval and budgeting within my agency
- Secure external funding
- Develop workplan
- Collaborative activity
- Development of EE guidelines and standards of excellence
- ACEE should...
 - recruit more groups to deliver on Framework
 - develop an on-line 'picture' showing who is doing what to deliver on
 - develop an evaluation scheme to monitor progress
 - identify best practices, and document and celebrate progress

What would you like to see happen after today – what are the milestones along our shared path?"

- Develop 3 year planning cycle for Framework
- Annual report by ACEE and EEE stakeholders that documents progress
- Put success stories and early adopters on-line
- Development of regionally based initiatives
- ACEE to engage industry and corporate sector groups in this initiative
- Organizations begin to link to and refer to the Framework as they move forward in their work