

# 5<sup>th</sup> WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CONGRESS

*Earth, our common home*  
**Montreal 2009**

[www.5weec.uqam.ca](http://www.5weec.uqam.ca)

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## Congress Coordination Report

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Lakehead  
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## Major Partners:



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**August 2009**

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## 1. Introduction

The 5th World Environmental Education Congress was held from May 10 to 14, 2009 at the Palais des congrès in Montréal. This multicultural, socioscientific event enabled some 2,200 stakeholders in the field, from 106 countries, to explore better ways of sharing Earth, our common home, in our schools, our institutions, our neighbourhoods, our businesses, our cities, our villages and our regions. The program comprised 133 activity sessions, as well as parallel activities and an Exhibition Fair. The Congress was a rich meeting ground for sharing knowledge, discussing practices, and developing projects or courses of political action. The wealth and diversity of presentations (1,028 in all) and the quality of the various activities were cited by many of the delegates.

As an opportunity for sharing expertise, the Congress enabled the creation or consolidation of partnerships between various actors and agencies in the field of environmental education. The event also served to strengthen various national and international networks. The mobilization of more than 200 players in environmental education in the organization of this event demonstrated a real solidarity in the sharing of tasks and resources, so that, despite several challenges mentioned later in this report, the event was a resounding success.

## 2. Congress Overview

The 5th World Environmental Education Congress was co-organized by Lucie Sauvé, Université du Québec à Montréal, Bob Jickling, Lakehead University, Ontario, the Association québécoise pour la promotion de l'éducation relative à l'environnement (AQPERE), and the Canadian Network for Environmental Education and Communication (EECOM). The event was part of the series of World Congresses coordinated by the Secretariat of the World Environmental Education Congresses.

### 2.1 History

The World Environmental Education (EE) Congress movement arose out of a desire to create a forum for dialogue and synergy among educators in all sectors, including schools and universities, and from national, regional and international organizations, associations and networks.

The first World Congress took place in Espinho, Portugal, in 2003. Drawing some 350 environmental education stakeholders from various parts of the world, this initial event, though relatively modest in scope, managed to generate a high level of enthusiasm. As evidence of the growing interest in this initiative, the 2nd World Congress, held in Rio de Janeiro in 2004, attracted some 1,500 participants.

Attendance at the 3rd World Congress in Turin, Italy, in 2005 exceeded all expectations by drawing nearly 3,500 participants from 115 countries. This 3rd edition, a “quantum leap” for environmental education and sustainable development, was the qualitative and quantitative turning point that truly established these World Congresses as major international events bringing together environmental education stakeholders from around the world. Following the Turin Congress, a permanent Secretariat of the World Environmental Education Congresses (a biennial event) was established at the *Istituto per l'Ambiente e l'Educazione di Torino*.

The 4th World Environmental Education Congress, held in Durban, South Africa in 2007, attracted 1,000 participants despite the challenge of the location, and confirmed the relevance of this type of event.

Finally, this 5th World Environmental Education Congress, held in Montréal in May 2009, with some 2,000 participants from 106 countries, again confirmed the relevance of these meetings and the value of embracing different educational sectors and various cultures. The number of attendees would have been significantly higher were it not for the global economic crisis and the threat of an H1N1 epidemic.

## 2.2 General Objectives of the 5th World Environmental Education Congress

- Promoting the role of environmental education in developing and enriching human identity and constructing healthier individuals, communities, and societies
- Highlighting the contribution environmental education brings to **social innovation** by addressing socio-ecological issues and fostering eco-development in every society
- Emphasizing the role environmental education can play in **public policy development**, and showing how public policy can strengthen environmental education

## 2.3 Principles

- Create an event of **global scope**, bringing together participants from all over the world.
- Root the Congress **in the host city**: creating a decidedly Montréal event in which the **urban environment** plays an important role.
- Recognize and respect **cultural diversity**, in particular, by adopting three official languages: French, English and Spanish.
- Foster **knowledge sharing** through a **multidisciplinary, multisectoral** Congress that encompasses a diversity of scientific disciplines, epistemological approaches and types of knowledge, including traditional knowledge.
- Adopt a policy and strategies that embody **eco-responsibility**, including targets of Zero Carbon emissions, Zero Waste production and consumption of Local Foods.
- Adopt strategies to promote **social equity** and offer **access** to participants who are less fortunate and from developing countries.
- Adopt a collaborative and participatory approach to coordinating, organizing and managing the event, involving various stakeholders and organizations active in the field of environmental education: institutes of higher education and research, governmental organizations, school boards, teacher's unions, non-governmental organizations, museums, parks, etc.

## 2.4 Official Languages

With a view to promoting intercultural exchange, the Congress adopted three official languages: French, English and Spanish. This decision entailed several challenges: finding the necessary financial resources, investing considerable time and ensuring the quality of the translations.

Delegate presentations (including oral, poster, workshop, round-table and NGO Forum presentations) were delivered in each submitting author's official language of choice.

Simultaneous translation was available in three languages at the opening session, plenary sessions, Political Forum panel discussions, symposiums, wrap-up and closing session. Simultaneous translation into English or French was provided during the thematic niche plenary sessions and NGO Forum plenary sessions.

## 2.5 Central Theme of the Congress

The vision for this World Environmental Education Congress is “**Earth as our common home**”, the “*Oikos*”, or household that we humans share with one another and with other forms of life. This “household” underlies the issues of identity, solidarity and socio-ecological relations with all forms of life. We explored the inter-relationships between ecology, ecosophy and economy, and examined the contributions that environmental education can make towards the development of these three aspects of our relationship to the world.

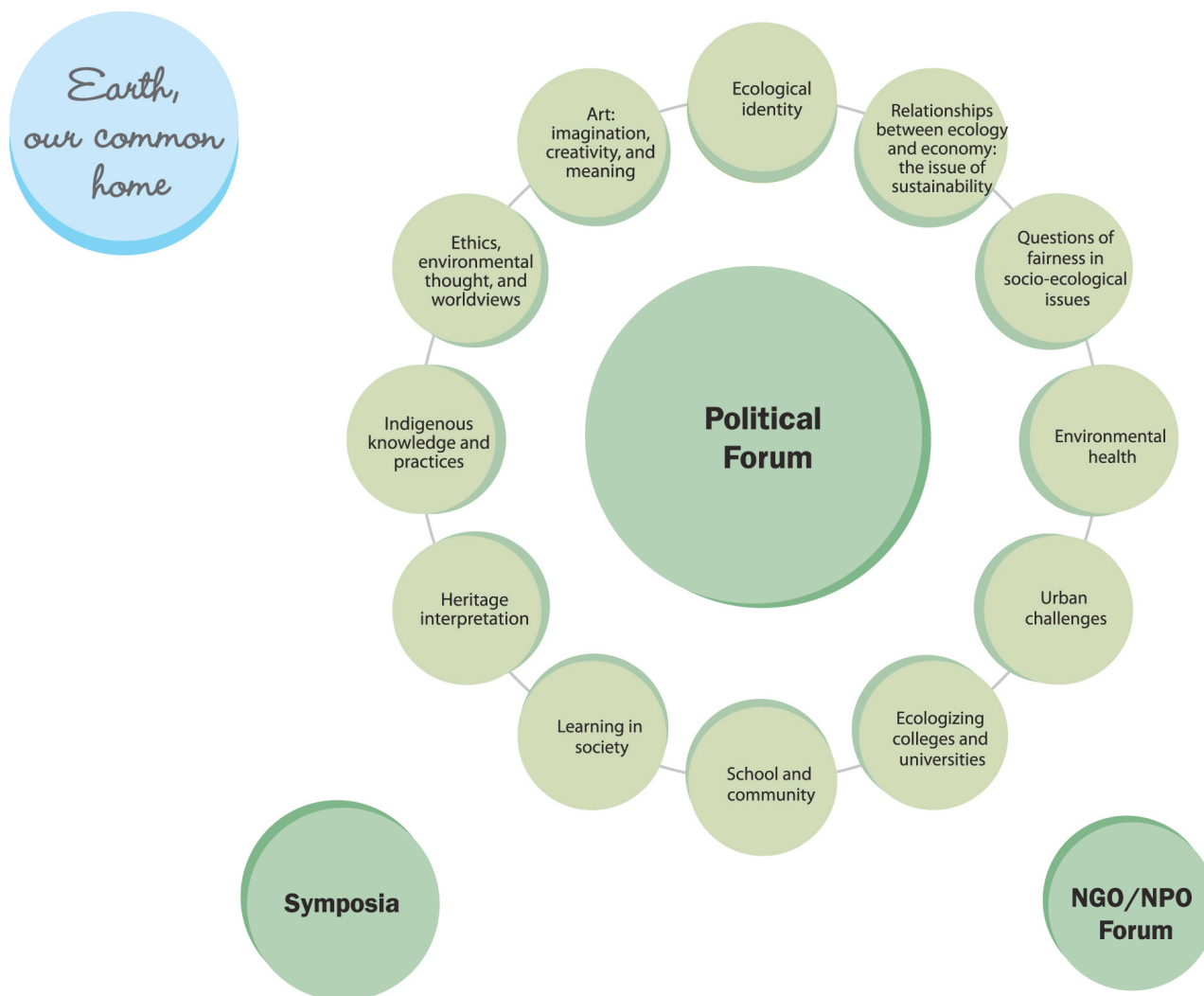
## 2.6 Crosscutting Questions

We posed three questions (related to the three general objectives) for participants to consider throughout the Congress. The Congress thus became an opportunity to engage in a collective research and learning process.

- **How can environmental education add meaning to our lives?**  
How does environmental education contribute to the construction of healthier individuals, communities, and social identities? How does this contribution enhance socio-ecological understanding and relationships?
- **How can environmental education contribute to social innovation?**  
To what social models do we aspire? What forms of social innovation do we value? In light of these questions, how can environmental education contribute to addressing socio-ecological issues, constructive change, and eco-development? How should environmental education contribute to citizen actions and social and cultural change within these social models?
- **How can environmental education contribute to political innovation and influence public policies?**  
How can we foster citizenship awareness and prepare citizens for participation in public policy development? What policy changes are needed to support and develop environmental education? How can we re-imagine environmental education? If you could talk directly to your *minister of education* or *environment*, *dean of education/science/humanities*, or favourite *non-governmental organization*, what message would you have? What would your environmental education plan be?

## 2.7 Socioscientific Structure

The structure of the socioscientific content of the 5th EE Congress was formulated in the preliminary meetings between the co-chairs, and subsequently approved and expanded by the Socioscientific Committee. This structure (presented in page 6) retained its original form: all the planned themes and activities were taken into account and implemented.



## 2.8 Socioscientific Activities

### *Thematic niches*

The socioscientific activities of the Congress were organized into 12 thematic niches:

1. Relationships between ecology and economy: the issue of sustainability
2. Questions of fairness in socio-ecological issues
3. Environmental health
4. Urban challenges
5. Ecologizing colleges and universities
6. School and community
7. Learning in society
8. Heritage interpretation
9. Indigenous knowledge and practices
10. Ethics, environmental thought, and worldviews
11. Art: imagination, creativity, and meaning
12. Ecological identity

Each thematic niche comprised a set of activities (oral presentations, workshops, posters and round table discussions) based on a specific theme. The selected themes related to the three spheres of interaction that are at the very basis of human and social development, namely relation to self, relation to others (human and other-than-human) and relation to the environment, our *Oikos*. These themes were chosen with a view to complementing those introduced at previous Congresses and reflect the outcome of broad consultations. The twelve (12) selected themes offered a wide range of opportunity for participation. Our aim was to encourage all environmental education stakeholders, in various sectors of activity and from various regions of the world, to present their work and share their ideas.

### *Symposia*

The five (5) symposia, involving a number of panellists, dealt with specific topics relating to crosscutting interests or current issues:

- Methodology and Pedagogy: Exploring Current Directions in Environmental Education Research
- The Whys of Evaluation
- Scientific and Environmental Education
- Environmental Education in the Circumpolar World: Making Connections
- Innovative Learning about Wildlife Biodiversity: The Canadian Wildlife Federation Learning Institute

### *Political Forum*

Conducted in panel format, this forum focused one of the three crosscutting questions of the Congress: **How can environmental education influence public policy?** More specifically, how can it prepare citizens to participate in public affairs and exercise a political role? How, in turn, can public policies foster the development of environmental education?

Five panels brought together figures from various spheres of responsibility to debate this question through brief presentations and discussions with participants:

- Major international organizations in support of environmental education
- National government agencies as levers of environmental education
- The leadership of cities in environmental education
- Universities and teacher training in environmental science
- Youth organization action in mobilizing and environmentally educating

### *NGO Forum*

This forum allowed 120 non-profit organizations operating in the field of environmental education to showcase their programs, projects, productions and achievements. Representatives of these organizations from around the world had an opportunity to present their work and exchange ideas with Congress participants. All delegates were encouraged to visit the NGO information booths and interact with their representatives. This new format within the congress space shed light on the issues and challenges facing NGOs in their environmental education activities.

### *Keynote Presentations*

Several renowned speakers explored the theme “Earth, our common home” and attempted to answer elements of the Congress’s three crosscutting questions. Stephen Lewis, internationally renowned specialist on the issue of

HIV/AIDS, spoke in English on “The Health Impact of Global Climate Change”. Ricardo Petrella, political scientist, economist and iconic figure in the alterglobalization movement, spoke in French on “Life, the Great Challenge: The World Is Not a Commodity”. Adriana Puiggrós, pillar of popular education in Latin America and prominent figure within the Argentinean left, gave a presentation in Spanish entitled “Towards a Socially-Constructed Knowledge for a More Human World”. Finally, Peter Cole and Pat O’Riley, researchers in Aboriginal Studies, gave a presentation in English, entitled “Coyote and Raven (P)re-visit Sustainability, Technology and Run-away Capitalism – Now in Paperback”.

## 2.9 Parallel Activities

### *Special Issue of the Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*

Responding to concerns during early Congress consultations, about perceived gaps between practical and academic experiences, the *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education* produced a special issue for the World Congress. Volume 14, with the special title, Context, Experience, and the Socioecological : Inquiries into Practice, was distributed with registration materials to all participants. Its aim, at the Congress and for years to come, is encourage dialogue between various sectors within the environmental education community.

### *Children of the World*

Producing a collective multimedia document, the “Children of the World” project opened the floor to children from all corners of the globe by giving them a virtual space through which to express what matters to them most. Through the diversity of their unique perspectives, sensitivities, concerns and dreams, these children—in their own words and in their own language—introduced delegates to their environment. As we all know, children are not mere “beneficiaries” of environmental education; they are also exceptional educators themselves, capable of using their awareness and critical thought to enrich the problem-solving process and to join together in reinventing and reconstructing their world.

### *The Eco-show*

Combining biodiversity, fantasy and eco-responsibility, *An Evening Under the Moon* provided surprises, laughter and thrills in this night-time adventure at the Montréal Biodôme. More than 600 participants followed the pathway through the Biodôme’s ecosystems where they were met by actors portraying various characters. Visitors encountered an array of song, dance, music and circus arts performances along the way. A fifth ecosystem, that of eco-responsibility, raised awareness about the importance of responsible consumption. Healthy snacks were offered by our generous sponsors, contributing to the festive mood.

### *International Festival of Environmental Storytelling*

Storytelling is an ideal vehicle for expressing our relationship to the world. Through the power of the imagination, storytelling serves to feed the thought process and build awareness of our relationship to the environment. The Festival of Environmental Storytelling added a touch of “magic” to the Congress. The event, held on four evenings in two cafés on Saint-Laurent Boulevard, featured some 30 spinners of tales in English and French. As part of the festival, a collection of stories entitled *Contes verts pour une planète bleue* [Green Tales for a Blue Planet] was launched at the Exhibition Pavilion.

### *Journal Corner*

The journal corner was a special activity, located in the Exhibit Fair, designed to link Congress presenters with a variety of journals and editors to assist with the process of publication. Authors could see examples of journals and speak with representatives of these journals about submission procedures and publication possibilities. The



Journal Corner also provided opportunities for Congress delegates to become more familiar with publications in Environmental Education and related fields. See also the section on “Dissemination” later in this report

### *CinEE - A Window to the World*

CINEE – A Window to the World, paid homage to artists, producers and directors who, through their art, sought to sensitize, educate and transform our relationship with the environment. It was an opportunity to view and discuss diverse productions and to demonstrate their current and potential contribution to environmental education. CinEE was also an opportunity to pay homage to Pierre Dansereau and Frédéric Back, two internationally renowned pioneers of environmental education in Quebec.

### *Round Table on Issues Relating to the Expansion of Mining Transnationals*

An international round table on *L'écojustice, l'éducation relative à l'environnement et les enjeux autochtones dans le contexte contemporain de déploiement des transnationales extractives* [Eco-justice, Environmental Education and Aboriginal Issues in the Contemporary Context of the Expansion of Extractive Transnationals] was held at the Université du Québec à Montréal in conjunction with the Congress. The aim of this event was to explore various types of issues facing communities confronted with ecosystem degradation caused by mining exploitation. It was also an opportunity for discussing how to deal with the educational challenges arising from this type of situation.

## **2.10 Special Events**

### *Performance of L'Arche*

The production company l'Arsenal gave a performance of their multimedia show, *L'Arche [The Ark]* at the opening ceremony of the Congress. This powerful, imaginative production combined elements of dance, acrobatics and new technology. It examined the delicate balance between humans and nature, in a celebration of life and biodiversity. With breathtaking images that captured the imagination, the piece reminded us that the future of our world depends on each and every one of us.

### *Presentation of an honorary doctorate to Richard Desjardins*

At the closing session of the Congress, the Université du Québec à Montréal, by decision of the University's Board of Directors and on the recommendation of its Faculty of Education, awarded an honorary doctorate to Richard Desjardins, an artist actively involved in environmental causes. The award was made in recognition of the artist's exceptional contribution to the advancement of social justice and an eco-society. The ceremony was attended by UQAM Rector Claude Corbo, Chair of the Board of Directors Isabelle Hudon, Dean of the Faculty of Education Marc Turgeon, UQAM Doctor honoris causa Gilles Vigneault, filmmaker Robert Monderie, and Chair of l'Action boréale de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue Henri Jacob.

### *Launch of the Declaration on Biodiversity*

At the closing reception of the Congress, the UN Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity launched a Declaration on Biodiversity, in anticipation of the upcoming International Year of Biodiversity in 2010.

## **2.11 Exhibition Fair**

The Congress exhibition fair was an informative commercial event highlighting Quebec, Canadian and international know-how in the areas of education, teaching and the environment. This space brought together 70

exhibitors, including organizations, institutions and businesses engaged in environmental education or offering examples of environmental responsibility. The Exhibition Pavilion was a venue for a broad variety of activities organized by the Canadian Wildlife Federation and presented throughout the Congress: screenings of documentaries and corporate videos, book launches, presentations and discussions.

## 2.12 Organizational Structure

The 5th World Environmental Education Congress is a non-profit corporation, legally constituted since June 29, 2007. In terms of its organizational structure, the Executive Committee is equivalent to a Board of Directors heading up the organization. Its members include representatives of the four organizations jointly responsible for the general organization and coordination of the Congress.

The Coordinating Committee is an executive board whose mandate is to forge links among the other committees, coordinate activities and ensure the success of the Congress.

The Socioscientific Committee is made up of experts who serve as international liaisons and establish the specific themes of the Congress.

The Organizing Committee is composed of representatives of the partners involved in the organization of this Congress. Working in close collaboration with the two Co-Chairs, hired Congress staff, and JPdL, a firm specializing in convention planning and organization, the Organizing Committee oversees the general planning and logistics of the event, ensures compliance with ethical guidelines and handles communications between the partners and the media. This committee is responsible for planning and ensuring the smooth running of all Congress activities. The Organizing Committee comprises four sub-committees: the Finance Committee, the Communications Committee, the Eco-responsibility Committee and Logistics,

This degree of collaboration and partnership is rather unusual for the organizational structure of a Congress Corporation. The structure facilitated a participatory approach to the organization of this international event entailing complex logistics.



## 2.13 Eco-responsibility

The Congress Organizing Committee established an eco-responsibility committee, policy and action plan to:

- Inform delegates, exhibitors and partners how to participate in the environmentally responsible approach proposed by the conference organizers
- Minimize the environmental footprint of the event
- Make responsible procurement choices

Communications strategies included: providing participants and exhibitors with a manual of ecologically responsible recommendations, and forming a "green team", present throughout the conference, to help participants sort their waste and to inform them of the measures established by the organization to make this a truly eco-responsible event.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Planning and Organization

The participatory organizational structure created by the Steering Committee made rigorous demands on the coordinating team in order to maintain its form and ensure its efficient functioning.

In formulating their action plans, the various committees were inspired by the principles of the Congress (presented in 2.3). Once the action plans were approved by the Executive Committee, it was necessary to

coordinate the teams and find ways to achieve the objectives, while applying the Congress principles and treating the teams of volunteer workers with respect.

Despite the challenges, this vigilant approach was maintained throughout the process of organizing the Congress. By maintaining a presence on various committees, reviewing schedules and reminding committee members of their own responsibilities, the coordinating team ensured the functioning of the various structures of the Congress. Meetings were held regularly to review the various files, and of course, to acknowledge our appreciation for the generous contribution of the many volunteer committee members.

Planning a world congress is an extremely complex affair. For the 5th World Environmental Education Congress, the period from the preliminary outlines to the actual event was nearly three years; this presented a planning challenge due to fluctuations in the global, national, provincial and local political and socio-economic contexts. For more details on this topic, see the "Challenges" section, detailing the contextual realities that demanded some adjustments to the action plans. Despite the difficulties, the planning of the Congress progressed smoothly and most of the original intentions were realized.

Financially, the changing contexts sometimes appeared to be heading the project towards a budget deficit. The concerted efforts of the Steering Committee, the Coordinating Committee and the Organizing Committee to involve financial partners, to replace some expenditures with gifts in kind from numerous contributors, and finally, to rigorously oversee all financial transactions, finally bore fruit. The Corporation will be able to cover all the expenses of the Congress and all costs incurred by the co-organizers during the three years.

## 3.2 Respect for Principles

In the course of preliminary discussions, the Steering Committee identified and defined specific guidelines, which shaped and influenced the choices of the organizers throughout the various stages of the project. These principles guided the process and ensured a considered and coherent approach.

- *A World Congress*

With nearly 2,200 participants from 106 countries, it was easy to comply with this first basic principle regarding the international character of the Congress.

- *A Congress rooted in the host environment, the City of Montréal*

The dynamism and quality of papers presented during the convention, particularly within the "Urban Challenges" niche, and the meaningful conclusions of the "City's leadership in environmental education" panel reflect the important place accorded to this second principle. We should also mention the exceptional involvement of three City of Montreal departments in the organization of several of the Congress's socioscientific and parallel activities.

- *Recognition of and respect for linguistic diversity*

During the preparation stage, this principal was observed primarily through the Congress website, newsletters and various communications; from the start, visitors had access to all content in French, Spanish and English. Communication with delegates, presenters, members of the socioscientific committee and niche leaders was also in one of the official languages of the Congress, according to personal preference. During the Congress, participants could present their papers in one of the three languages, as they wished, and simultaneous translation was provided at all plenary sessions. For further details, see the section on official languages (2.4).

- *A Congress encompassing various scientific disciplines, epistemological approaches, and types of knowledge, including traditional knowledge*

The content structure, including 12 niche topics, five symposia, a political forum with five panels and an NGO Forum, promoted an interdisciplinary and trans-sectoral approach. The conclusion of the various socioscientific activities, inspired by the through line of the three crosscutting questions, was remarkably successful at the Congress wrap-up. The emphasis on Indigenous culture was evident in the welcoming speech made by Henry Lickers (Haudenosaunee) at the opening ceremony, the plenary session given by Aboriginal presenters, and the niche theme dedicated to Indigenous knowledge and practices as they relate to environmental education.

- *The adoption of ecological principles, including Zero Carbon, Zero Waste and local food*

Firstly, Zero-Carbon and Zero-Waste must be understood as general, or even utopian, objectives rather than precise targets. The establishment of an Eco-responsibility Committee in the early planning stages enabled us to integrate strategic measures to reduce or offset the impact that a gathering of this magnitude has on the environment. A detailed report on these measures is attached.

- *Particular attention to access for the less fortunate and participants from developing countries*

Several requests for assistance were made from national and international partners to ensure the participation of a maximum number of students, teachers and professionals from developing countries. We obtained financial contributions from the IEPF, CIDA, UNEP, the CSN (young registrants), and the Canada Council for the Arts to help cover the cost of travel, housing and/or registration for 90 participants.

- *An organizational structure promoting collaboration with different types of actors and organizations involved in environmental education*

The participatory nature of the Congress was evident in the make-up of the various committees (Organizing Committee, Socioscientific Committee, Niche Committees, NGO Forum Committee, Political Forum Committee, Communications Committee, and Eco-responsibility Committee). The diverse membership of these groups offered an almost exhaustive portrait of the locations where environmental education happens around the world. The acknowledgments section of this report presents the actors and organizations involved in organizing the Congress.

## 3.3 Achievement of Objectives

### 3.3.1 General Objectives

- *Promoting the role environmental education plays in developing and enriching human identity and constructing more healthy individuals, communities, and societies*
- *Highlighting the contribution environmental education brings to **social innovation** by addressing socio-ecological issues and contributing to eco-development within all societies*
- *Emphasizing the role environmental education can play in **public policy development**, and how public policy can strengthen environmental education in public policy development*

These objectives relate to the strategy of the three key questions, which served as a through line for the Congress's socioscientific activities and the various communication tools produced for the event. Throughout the major session, the opening and closing sessions of the thematic niches, and the Congress wrap-up session, presenters offered answers to the three crosscutting questions and shared their thoughts on these themes. A research project was also established to collect the participants' answers to the three questions and see how these answers were influenced by the Congress. Following the Congress, delegates received an invitation to participate in this research project, entitled "Environmental education in our lives, our societies and our public

policy." 230 people responded. The results of this research will be published in scientific journals and on the Congress website.

The diligent work of the co-chairs, the socioscientific committee members, the niche directors and others involved in planning the activities (presidents of the symposia, organizers of the NGO Forum, panel chairs of the Political Forum, etc.) helped move us toward these goals. The reports of the leaders of the socioscientific activities, which will be posted on the Congress website, will allow for a more detailed assessment of the extent to which the objectives were achieved. For now, the presentations made by the niche directors and the NGO Forum organizers at the Congress wrap-up session are available online. These presentations offer some answers to the crosscutting questions.

### 3.3.2 Operational Objectives

- *Fostering inter-sectoral collaboration in environmental education among universities, colleges, schools, museums, parks, NGOs, political and economic organizations, etc.*

This goal was definitely achieved: 120 NGOs participated in the NGO Forum and the list of congress participants reflects the diversity of environments from which they came. The partners and sponsors of the event also represent these various spheres of activities.

- *Stimulating partnership and networking*

The preparation of the Congress provided an opportunity to raise the awareness of a number of partners on the importance of environmental education in our society. The event was supported by 28 political, para-public and private organizations and institutions (the list of partners and sponsors is available on the Congress website).

Moreover, in addition to informal meetings held in conjunction with the Congress, several networks used the event to meet with their members. The Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE), the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC), Planet'ERE, the Canadian Network for Environmental Education and Communication (EECOM), and the Réseau francophone international de recherche en éducation relative à l'environnement (RefERE) held meetings in Montreal during the Congress or in the days that followed.

- *Providing a context for conducting an evaluative assessment of environmental education initiatives accentuating research, action, and links between research and action*

No formal assessment of initiatives had been planned. However, several initiatives were evaluated during oral and poster presentations. The program (with its thematic structure and 1028 presentations from various participants) made it possible to establish a de facto assessment of the principal current concerns and the types of initiatives and research directions in environmental education. This information that can be deduced from the program remains to be systematized.

- *Encouraging the emergence of new programs and projects following the Congress*

Conference participants will have increased their knowledge and gained inspiration from initiatives underway in other countries. The exchange of ideas during the event will surely contribute to the participants' medium or long-term environmental education programs and projects. It is not yet possible to fully assess this aspect of the Congress.

- *Furthering the professional development of participants and training of the next generation*

The Congress provided an excellent opportunity for training and networking. No formal evaluation of this objective was envisaged. However, treatment of the data from the online research will provide some answers. In fact, one

of the questions specifically concerns the influence of the Congress on the delegate's answers to the three crosscutting questions.

### 3.4 Quantitative Results

#### *Proposals for papers and presentations*

The Congress Coordinating Team received 1,702 proposals for papers. Of these, 1,566 were accepted and 145 rejected. Among the accepted papers, 438 were cancelled by the submitters for reasons stated in the following section on registration. At the Congress, there was a total of 1,028 oral, poster and roundtable presentations.

#### *Socioscientific program activities*

During the event, 466 socioscientific activities were offered, specifically 12 opening plenary sessions and 12 closing plenary sessions for the thematic niches, 138 oral presentations, 76 workshops, 209 round tables, 5 Political Forum panels, 5 symposia, 4 keynote presentations, 2 poster sessions and 3 sessions of NGO Forum presentations.

#### *Registration and participation in activities*

Initially, 2,435 people registered for the Congress. Of these, 275 had to cancel for various reasons, including lack of funding or the inability to obtain an entry visa. Following these cancellations, 2,258 people were still registered for the Congress. This number includes staff, those who received free admission, and the Congress organizers and volunteers, leaving a total of 2,020 delegates participating in the Congress activities. The global economic crisis, the H1N1 influenza pandemic and the tightening of requirements for Canadian embassies to issue visas largely account for this situation. To these 2,020 participants, we must add the people who were not registered for the Congress but who attended three parallel activities open to the public: the International Round Table on "Ecojustice, environmental education and Aboriginal issues in the contemporary context of the proliferation of mining transnationals", the eco-show, and the International Festival of Environmental Storytelling. In all, more than 2,200 people participated in the 5th World Environmental Education Congress.

The average attendance at socioscientific activity sessions (lasting one hour and 30 minutes) was 586. There were 730 participants at the opening plenary session of the Congress and 570 at the closing plenary session.

Among the 12 thematic niches, those with the most presentations were "Ecologizing colleges and universities" (149), "School and community" (295), and "Learning in society" (145). The average number of presentations per niche was 93.

#### *Partners, exhibitors and sponsors*

Six major partners and 9 supporting partners helped finance the Congress. The event was also supported by 15 sponsors, and 97 organizations and companies participated in the Congress exhibition.

### 3.5 Press Relations

Several interviews were given before the event. An article on the Congress and an advertisement appeared in the special Earth Day section of the newspaper *Le Devoir* in late April. Journalists from print and electronic media covered the Congress activities, and the award of an honorary doctorate to Richard Desjardins attracted particular interest. In all, the Congress inspired 22 articles and broadcasts. There were 29 media reports on the awarding of the honorary doctorate, primarily in the Quebec media.



## 4. Challenges

The report of the coordinating team would not be complete without listing the many obstacles that we faced.

### *Financial crisis at UQAM*

The mandate to host the Congress in Canada was given to the two Co-Chairs who agreed that Montreal would be the best city in which to host this event. With this decision, it was immediately apparent that collaboration with Co-Chair Lucie Sauvé's home institution, UQAM, would be critical to the success of the Congress. In 2007, more than a year after the decision to hold the Congress in Montréal, the university suffered a financial crisis relating to the construction of several new buildings. This temporarily raised a question as to whether the university would endorse the preparation of the congress. Despite these difficulties, however, from 2006 to 2009 UQAM offered tremendous support in organizing the event, in terms of both financial and human resources. In particular, the Faculty of Education, Financial Services, the Audiovisual Service, the Department of Communications, the International Relations Office and Repro-UQAM were generously involved in various stages of the project.

### *Three elections in close succession*

Provincial elections were triggered in Quebec in spring 2007, followed by a federal election a few weeks later, and Quebecers again returned to the polls in December 2008. These three elections in close succession slowed the decision-making of government bodies, thus delaying the evaluation of grant applications and raising questions about obtaining the required political support and financial resources.

### *Montréal's full events calendar*

The Congress organizers had wanted to hold the event in June. But as the Montréal Grand Prix was scheduled for that time, there would not have been sufficient accommodations for participants of both events, and the cost of hotel accommodations increases during the Grand Prix. The Grand Prix was eventually cancelled, but it was already too late to book the Palais des congrès for June. We believe that more people could have attended the Congress if it had been held in June, closer to the holiday period. Finally, there were several other events relating to the environment during the same period, making it more difficult to obtain sponsorship.

### *Global financial crisis*

The economic crisis had a definite impact on both the financing of the Congress and the turnout. It was much more difficult to solicit support from financial partners in this context and it was also the cause of a number of cancelled registrations.

### *UQAM professors strike*

From mid-March to late April 2009, the UQAM professors were on strike in a quest for wage parity with the rest of the Université du Québec network and the creation of new positions to ensure the quality of teaching and the mentoring of graduate students. This meant that the Conference Co-Chair and some thematic niche leaders were on strike. These professors and Congress coordinating staff did everything possible to continue preparations for the congress while supporting the strikers. However, this situation greatly complicated the work of the team and elicited considerable concern. Fortunately, the UQAM services—particularly the audio-visual and financial services—were able to maintain their commitment to the Congress.

### *H1N1 Pandemic*



The outbreak and spread of the H1N1 virus worried participants and organizers of the Congress. At the start of the pandemic, it was feared that the Mexican delegates would not be allowed to leave their country. It was later feared that delegates from other countries would not be able to enter Canada and that some borders would be closed due to the pandemic. Some Congress registrants were worried about the possibility of contracting the virus in Montréal. The Congress coordinating team monitored developments daily and followed the World Health Organization advisory of May 1, which did not recommend travel restrictions or border closures. The Congress secretariat reassured concerned participants, and a press release was issued to share the WHO recommendations, encourage delegates to stay informed on the development of the pandemic, and convey the Organizing Committee's decision not to cancel the event.

### *Attack on the UQAM computer system*

At the start of the Congress, UQAM was the victim of a hacker and had to shut down its computer system for two days. As a result, several members of the coordinating team did not have access to their inbox, and the organizers of the NGO Forum lost information and had to re-schedule at the last minute. It was also impossible for Media Relations to reply to last-minute requests e-mailed from journalists.

## **5. Outcomes**

Many of the outcomes of the convention are hard to measure. No mechanism has been established to identify the ways in which the Congress may influence the professional activities of the participants. In general terms, we can see that both the organizational process and the event itself consolidated several collaborative networks. Here are a few examples:

- Members of international organizations working in environmental education participated in the Congress and held meetings during the event. The Congress therefore may have shaped the planning activities of these organizations.
- Communication links were established between three City of Montreal departments during the organization of the Congress. These three sectors that had barely collaborated previously now welcome this new dynamic.
- The organization of the Congress strengthened the Quebec environmental education network and gave it a window on the world.
- Through the niche on issues of socio-ecological equity, the Congress helped consolidate partnerships between NGOs involved in resisting mining transnationals.

## **6. Recommendations**

The Congress logistics report presents detailed recommendations for the logistical planning of future World Environmental Education Congresses. This report was prepared by JPdL, the firm hired to coordinate logistics for the event.

The Congress Organizing Committee would like to emphasize two points to consider when organizing the next World Congress:

- The value of the participatory structure of the organization of the event. This type of structure allows for fruitful exchanges between the committees and promotes informed decision-making.

- The importance of organizing the World Congress in a management context that respects the culture of the stakeholders in environmental education and embodies the values of its community: participation, sharing, conviviality, sustainability, cost efficiency, social equity, etc. Marketplace logic—often a factor in major events—has no place in the world of environmental education. It is important to adopt strategies that both provide efficient logistics and reflect the values of stakeholders in the field.

## 7. Dissemination

### *Dissemination via the Congress website*

A section entitled “Congress Reports” has been added to the Congress website. When completed in fall 2009, it will include:

- Reports from the niche directors
- NGO Forum report
- Summaries by the presidents of the Political Forum panels
- Eco-responsibility report
- Logistics report
- Coordination report
- Press review

### *Dissemination in scientific journals and associations newsletters*

The June-July 2009 number of the *.eco – l'educazione sostenibile* journal, produced in Italy by the Scholé Futuro Institute for Environment and Education (Istituto per l'Ambiente e l'Educazione Scholé Futuro), made the 5th World Environmental Education Congress its central thematic.

Congress presentations will appear in a number of publications. Several environmental educational journals from the “Journals Corner” of the Exhibition Fair will be publishing Congress output.

Summaries of the five panels of the Political Forum will appear in the next volume of the journal *Éducation relative à l'environnement : Regards – Recherches – Réflexions*, which will focus on the political aspect of environmental education.

A special issue of the Canadian journal *Éducation et Francophonie* will come out this fall, sharing the theme of the Congress. Also, the magazine *Vie pédagogique* is preparing a special issue on environmental education, focusing on the three key questions posed by the Congress.

Several bulletins of associations and research groups have already published or are about to publish a summary of the congress, including the newsletters of the AQPERE, Planet'ERE and Symbioses (Belgium), *Oeconomia humana* the bulletin of the Research Chair for Social Responsibility and Sustainable Development, etc.

Finally, as noted in Section 3 of this report, the results of the research project related to the Congress will also be disseminated in academic journals.

## 8. Acknowledgments

We wish to thank all those who were involved in organizing and running the Congress. Through their generous commitment, nearly 400 people contributed to the success of the event.

### Thank you to:

- 
- Members of the Executive Committee
  - Members of the Coordinating Committee
  - Members of the Organizing Committee
  - Members of the Eco-Responsibility Committee
  - Members of the Fundraising Committee
  - Members of the Communications Committee
  - Members of the NGO Forum Committee
  - Organizers of the Parallel Activities

The membership of these committees is available at: [http://www.5weec.uqam.ca/EN/equipe\\_organisateur.asp#b](http://www.5weec.uqam.ca/EN/equipe_organisateur.asp#b)

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- Members of the Niche Committees

The membership of these committees is available at: [http://www.5weec.uqam.ca/EN/equipe\\_thematiques.asp](http://www.5weec.uqam.ca/EN/equipe_thematiques.asp)

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- Symposia Chairs

These individuals are identified at: [http://www.5weec.uqam.ca/EN/presentation\\_activites\\_espacecongres.asp](http://www.5weec.uqam.ca/EN/presentation_activites_espacecongres.asp)

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- Presidents of the Political Forums

These individuals are identified at:  
[http://www.5weec.uqam.ca/EN/presentation\\_activites\\_espacecongres\\_forumpolitique.asp#forumfor1](http://www.5weec.uqam.ca/EN/presentation_activites_espacecongres_forumpolitique.asp#forumfor1)

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- Socioscientific Committee

The membership of this committee is available at: [http://www.5weec.uqam.ca/EN/equipe\\_socioscientific.asp](http://www.5weec.uqam.ca/EN/equipe_socioscientific.asp)

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- Major partners, supporting partners and sponsors of the event

The list of partners and sponsors is available at: [http://www.5weec.uqam.ca/EN/partenaires\\_introduction.asp](http://www.5weec.uqam.ca/EN/partenaires_introduction.asp)

- The logistics firm JPdL
- The staff at the UQAM Faculty of Education, Financial Services, Audiovisual Services, Communications Department, International Relations Office and Repro-UQAM
- The Palais des congrès de Montréal team
- The Secretariat of World Environmental Education Congresses
- Our partners in special events and educational visits
- The volunteers
- The translators
- The graphic designers

## 9. Conclusion

The 5th World Environmental Education Congress provided an opportunity for sharing knowledge, ideas and experiences. It confirmed the importance of environmental education in the development of individuals and societies. The event enabled participants to forge new links with players in the field, for organizations to consolidate bonds of partnership, and for EE networks to be strengthened.

We would like to thank all of the Congress organizers and participants for helping to make this event such a resounding success.

## Appendices

The following documents are available on request:

- 5WEEC Logistics Report
- 5WEEC Press Review
- 5WEEC Eco-responsibility Report