

If and when?
Report of the National Education for Sustainable Development Expert Council Meeting
March 23, 2007
by Raissa Marks

Although the National Education for Sustainable Development Expert Council had previously "met" via teleconference in January, this was our first face-to-face meeting.

An underlying current through the entire meeting was whether or not Environment Canada would continue to fund the Expert Council and the provincial/territorial Working Groups. Learning for a Sustainable Future is currently negotiating with Environment Canada for this funding. When pressed to tell us "if and when" the funding would be confirmed, Environment Canada's representative at the meeting informed us that the funding is still in the "if" stage, but that if the two sides did come to an agreement, it would likely be by May 1. However, she also instructed us to proceed with the meeting on the assumption that the funding negotiations would be successful and that there would be continued funding for at least the next year. I guess we wait and see!

Working on the assumption that the funding would continue, much of the meeting was spent working on the Expert Council's vision and mission statements and goals. The agreed-upon mission statement was, "To promote a culture of ESD in Canada by developing and strengthening collaboration and leadership in education and learning." We developed strategies, including timelines and responsible parties, to support the mission and the goals. We also brainstormed some alternate names for the group. At the end of the meeting, we elected David Bell (York University) and Mary Ferguson (BC Hydro) to serve a one-year term as co-chairs of the Expert Council.

The organizers did an excellent job of engaging a wide variety of participants in the Expert Council. In attendance were representatives from the provincial/territorial working groups, including representatives from NGOs, government, business, the formal education sector, and the post-secondary education sector, as well as national and international sustainability/environmental educational organizations. In addition to myself, participants from New Brunswick were Jean-Paul L'Italien, Comité du développement durable du nord-ouest, and Diane Pruneau, Groupe littoral et vie. Jean-Paul and I attended on behalf of the NB Education for Sustainable Development Working Group, while Diane was there on behalf of the North American Association for Environmental Education. Roland Chiasson, Nature NB, was also invited to participate on behalf of the NB Working Group, but he was unable to attend this meeting.

The National Education for Sustainable Development Expert Council was formed through a partnership between Learning for a Sustainable Future, Environment Canada, and Manitoba's Departments of Education, Citizenship and Youth and Advanced Education and Literacy.