



ALBERTA WATER LEARNING NETWORK

Rundles Mission, June 1-3, 2009

In early June, the Sustainability Network is organizing the inaugural gathering of the Alberta Water Learning Network. From noon Monday, June 1 to early afternoon Wednesday, June 3 at Rundles Mission just outside Edmonton, current and emerging NGO water leaders will be convened to focus on exploring resource capacity challenges of the sector.

Leading an NGO is a demanding role in which committed individuals face tremendous pressure to effectively respond to complex environmental and organizational issues. A crucial factor for the success of any organization is resource capacity – most often in the form of financial resources. Many Alberta water leaders face considerable resource constraints in pursuing their work and funding questions are often foremost in the minds of organizational leaders. The solutions to ongoing funding challenges, as with many other issues that organizations face, are not simple and straightforward.

The goal of the Alberta Water Learning Network is to provide a space in which senior or aspiring ENGO leaders can explore these critical issues and generate ideas and approaches on how to respond. The program will draw heavily on the experience and knowledge of the participants as well as provide various thinking tools, speakers and content experts to develop a collective understanding about the complex issue of resource capacity.

Who Should Participate

The program is designed for senior environmental nonprofit leaders focused on water issues who are interested in taking time to critically reflect and who are seeking an opportunity to push their thinking about a number of sector priorities. The group of participants will be a rich resource and the success of the Learning Network depends largely on that talent and experience.

Some spaces are also reserved for emerging leaders who are expected to move very soon into leadership roles within the environmental community. The program is designed with lead organizational staff (executive directors) in mind though, in the past, we have had some board chairs and senior directors participate as well. Organizations are encouraged to nominate whomever they believe can benefit the most from this learning opportunity to help the sponsoring organization and inspire other organizations in their community on their return. Organizations can have more than one participant in the program.

Although this is the inaugural gathering of the Alberta Water Learning Network, applicants are encouraged to consider participation in subsequent sessions as continuity will help strengthen the experience for all involved. Subsequent sessions are planned for the fall of 2009 (communications and marketing) and the spring of 2010 (theme TBA).

Program Overview

The program emphasizes the link between thought and action. The program addresses the unique circumstances and perspectives of the environmental community and a requisite of the program is nesting the learning back into the culture and practice of their particular organization.

The learning network is comprised of the following components:

- **Peer Interaction:** The program emphasizes an interactive approach to learning allowing participants to learn from one another.
- **Diverse Learning Approaches:** The program combines exercises, lectures, discussions, and cases to provide participants with an integrated learning experience.
- **Action Learning:** At the end of the Learning Network session, participants will be offered a modest financial stipend to carry out some activity which grounds the learning in their organization or share their insights with a broader audience. Possible activities include joint projects, peer consulting, or reflective papers.

This three day session will focus on resource capacity.

- *Charlotte Young* will lead and facilitate the session. Dr. Charlotte Young is the principal of *ENVision synergy*, a management consulting firm specializing in facilitation, evaluation, public policy and organizational development. She has worked extensively in the Voluntary Sector in Canada and the United States.
- *Ken Wyman*, CFRE, will be the designated “content expert” for this gathering and will lead three training modules on a range of resource capacity issues. These will be facilitated discussions of key sector issues rather than introductory level, skills-building exercises.
- Guest speakers will also share their perspective.
 - *Andrew Nikiforuk*, journalist and author will be our guest one evening
 - An afternoon panel of funders will consist of:
 - *Alan Northcott*, Senior Program Officer, Max Bell Foundation
 - *Wafa Kadri*, Manager, Community Investment, RBC
 - *Ellen Dungen*, Manager, Community Relations, TD Bank
 - *Cheryl de Paoli*, Senior Manager, Alberta Ecotrust

Application Process

If you would like to participate, please submit a one or two page application letter describing your interest. Please describe:

- your organizational affiliation
- professional background and experience
- your interest in and/or experience with water and social change
- what facets of the Learning Network most appeal to you and why

Please also confirm that your sponsoring organization endorses your application and that the leadership is committed to anchoring Learning Network lessons within the organization and exploring ways on increasing impact.

Applications are due by Monday, April 27, 2009.

We do not want the cost of travel to preclude any possible candidate from applying/participating in the Learning Network and so will pre-approve and reimburse your travel expenses. Please provide your expected travel costs to and from Rundles Mission and the amount of subsidy needed in your application letter.

Please submit the application by email to paul@sustainabilitynetwork.ca. If you prefer, you can instead mail (single copy) to Paul Bubelis at the Sustainability Network, 215 Spadina Ave., Suite 128, Toronto, ON, M6S 1J5. Any mailed material must arrive in our office by the deadline. We will confirm receipt of all applications.

All applicants will be notified by Monday, May 4th with the results of the selection process. The program does not provide written or verbal evaluations of applicants either before or after the selection.

Tuition and Payment

Total tuition for the 3 day Learning Network (including lodging, meals, travel costs and program) session is \$300. Although the full cost is approximately \$1200 per person but we are very thankful to the Alberta Ecotrust, TD Bank Financial Group and the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation for covering the majority of the program costs.

A few larger watershed groups in Alberta have indicated they may be able to subsidize the participation of smaller organizations where this tuition may represent a barrier to participation. If you are interested in pursuing this opportunity, please clearly specify this in your application.

This session is a residential learning experience and we have found it essential that the group stay together throughout the gathering. We respectfully discourage late arrivals or early departures.

If you have any questions, please contact Paul Bubelis of the Sustainability Network at 416-324-2792 or paul@sustainabilitynetwork.ca