

# Earth and Peace Education Associates



## EPE Transitions

Volume 3 Issue 2

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**Transitions**, the e-educational resource of Earth and Peace Education Associates International (EPE) focuses on our global community's progress towards a culture of peace, i.e. a society of institutions and norms based on nonviolence, ecological sustainability, social justice, intergenerational equity and participatory decision-making. It provides you with resources that highlight the relationship between social and ecological peace – an understanding of which is essential to effectively responding to social peacelessness and ecological degradation.

You are invited to join the global network of educators working to bring about this transition. *Anita Wenden, Editor* < [wenden@rcn.com](mailto:wenden@rcn.com) >

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# Creating Sustainable Communities

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## AN EDUCATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE FOOD CRISIS IN THE GLOBAL NORTH AND SOUTH

There are close to one billion persons who suffer from hunger. That is about 20% of our fellow citizens. If we consider the millions more who are subjected to malnutrition, the numbers are even higher, and given the most recent global financial developments, this number will drastically increase in the months ahead. And while it can be expected that food prices may come down on account of the deflation of economies in the global North and South, the ever deepening poverty of our hungry fellow citizens will prevent them from having access to these cheaper food staples. In fact, the poorer a society, the more the malnutrition, hunger and even starvation its citizens will suffer, with the poorest and most vulnerable groups in those societies suffering the most.

**Indeed, this is a crisis situation, and its causes, with its wide ranging social and ecological consequences, are multiple and interconnected.**

One of the main causes is the overall global economic system that enriches the few, impoverishes the many and endangers the planet. It reflects the assumption that more economic growth is better, an illusion which pursues the creation of a larger pie without considering the manner in which it is distributed. This process of economic concentration is played out in national, regional and local communities. It disregards the need and the challenge to strive for equitable development, which balances growth with equity.

There are many other factors that aggravate this food crisis. A major one is human-induced climate change. Extreme weather conditions, such as floods and droughts, endanger or even destroy the food security system in a community. Another factor is the dilemma of food versus fuel whereby dominant nations and groups are able to use biofuels in a kind of zero-sum game with those who need the biomass for food: when corn is used for biofuel it cannot be used for food or feed ! A third factor is the land tenure system that leads to the acquisition of fertile land by wealthy local elites or

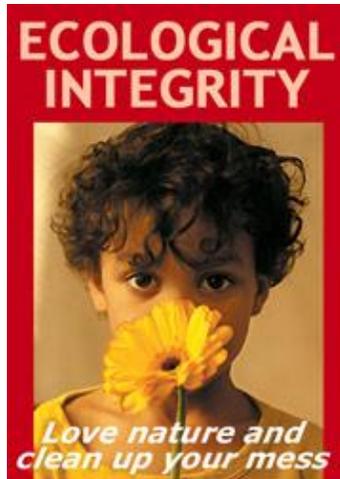
transnational corporations, driving hapless share croppers to overburdened cities. Rather than producing local staples, the land now owned by these corporations is used for exports of beef for fast-food outlets in the North and, as a result, the farmers drift to overcrowded urban areas where they eke out an existence, if they are lucky enough to find work.

### **How should educators in the global North and South respond to the food crisis?**

The most profound challenge is raising awareness of the politico-economic, ethical and ecological dimensions of the global economic system. However, awareness is only a first step; more difficult is the need to motivate oneself and one's audience to shoulder responsibility for the situation. We are reminded by Dietrich Bonhoeffer that "action does not spring from information, but a readiness for responsibility."

Educators must also bring education about the food crisis into their classrooms. In the North they can develop an integrated curriculum showing how lifestyles and waste are connected to the food crisis in the South. They may organize a fast or Hunger Banquet where the world's food pizza is divided in such a way that 80% of the world's population has to do with 20% of available food, while the other 20% luxuriate with the 80%, again stressing the need for equitable distribution. Educators in the South can develop school projects that foster self-reliant, equitable food production on the local level.

In both the North and South educators can contribute to an understanding and use of the sustainable communities development paradigm, which builds upon the economic, ecological, social, architectural, and educational strengths of a community through a process of community visioning, planning and implementing. This systemic approach deals with a community's long-term social, ecological and economic future and reduces the need for food and other assistance from outside the community. Indeed, a sustainable communities approach to the food crises requires a fundamental social change that must come from a grassroots that is inspired and informed by teachers in a vibrant educational system. The vision and ethical guidelines of the Earth Charter can be a great help in this effort as can the very practical approach outlined at [www.earthCAT.org](http://www.earthCAT.org)



## Guest interview

### Tamara Lorincz on education for sustainability in Nova Scotia

**Tamara Lorincz is the Executive Director of the Nova Scotia Environmental Network and the Coordinator of Sustainability Education Nova Scotia For Everyone (SENSE) Working Group. She is on the national board of Eco Justice Canada and has helped to establish the Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative.**

Anita Wenden, *Transitions* editor, interviewed Tamara on the purposes and goals of the working group *Sustainability Education in Nova Scotia for Everyone (SENSE)*

*Let's begin with the term 'sustainable'. It is applied to many areas nowadays, e.g. sustainable futures, sustainable peace, sustainable life styles, sustainable development. How does SENSE understand sustainability?*

SENSE uses the well-known definition of sustainability derived from the concept of sustainable development from the World Commission on Environment and Development's 1987 report *Our Common Future*, which is "...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." To achieve the goal of sustainability, UNESCO has identified eight action themes that countries should pursue: Gender Equality, Health Promotion, Environment, Rural Development, Cultural Diversity, Peace & Human Security, Sustainable Urbanization, and Sustainable Consumption. These are the themes that represent SENSE's broad understanding of sustainability and how we organize our work. More simply, however, sustainability is respecting people and the planet.

*Why 'education' for sustainable development (SD)? Isn't SD a matter for development experts and economists? Why was it felt necessary to establish a working group on sustainability education?*

At the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992 and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002, world leaders concluded that education was fundamental to achieving sustainable development. Agenda 21, the blueprint for sustainable development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, adopted by 179 countries stated that “Education is critical for promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of the people to address environment and development issues.” In 2003, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution declaring the period 2005-2014 to be the International Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) <http://portal.unesco.org/education>. Canada signed on to this UN Decade of ESD. As education is a provincial matter under our Constitution, the federal government funded and supported the establishment of provincial working groups to meet our UN requirements under the Decade of ESD. Currently, there are seven other provincial working groups across Canada. More information about these working groups can be found on the Learning for a Sustainable Future web site: [www.lsf-lst.ca](http://www.lsf-lst.ca)

#### *What are the purposes and goals of SENSE?*

SENSE is an active multi-stakeholder network whose purpose is to promote sustainability education in schools and in society in Nova Scotia. Over 150 individuals and organizations have joined SENSE. Our partners are from different sectors representing government, school boards, teachers, community, industry, and non-governmental organizations. SENSE has four goals:

Goal 1: To identify key current sustainability activities in schools, communities and media in Nova Scotia in order to find gaps that will help us determine objectives and priorities for future sustainability projects.

Goal 2: To enhance cross-sectoral understanding and strategic collaboration between local and provincial governments, education sector leaders, businesses, and non-governmental organizations in order to foster a culture for education for sustainability in Nova Scotia.

Goal 3: To influence education practitioners and policy development, particularly in the areas of curriculum, professional development, and facilities management.

Goal 4: To secure resources and funding to sustain SENSE.

More information about SENSE can be found at [www.nsen.ca](http://www.nsen.ca)

#### *What are some of the systemic changes your group would like to bring about in education in your communities?*

We would like the Government of Nova Scotia's Department of Education to make ESD a priority and to create an action plan to ensure that every student and citizen in our province is educated on sustainability.

*You recently organized a symposium on Earthkeeping and Peacebuilding. Why did you choose this theme?*

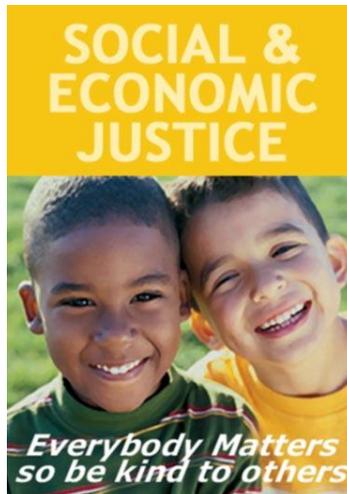
Last year, our SENSE Working Group decided to host an Annual Sustainability Education Symposium. For our first symposium, three SENSE members, the Nova Scotia Environmental Network, Peaceful Schools International and Saint Mary's University collaborated to organize the symposium and we chose two UNESCO themes: Environment and Peace & Human Security. Our First Annual Sustainability Education was entitled *Earthkeeping & Peacebuilding: Creating a Culture of Respect for People and the Planet*.

*On your website you refer to 'The Natural Step framework'. Briefly, what is this framework and how can it be used by sustainability educators?*

The Natural Step Framework provides a science-based, practical approach for sustainability planning. The Framework has been used successfully by communities, schools, businesses and organizations around the world. It was developed by Dr. Karl-Henrik Robert, a medical doctor, in Sweden. In his paper, *Educating A Nation: The Natural Step - A remarkable nation-wide program unites Sweden in moving from linear to cyclic processes - the hallmark of sustainability*, Dr. Robert explains how every Swedish household was educated on the basics of sustainability 20 years ago. It is no surprise that Sweden now has the best environmental performance of any country. Dr. Robert's latest book, *The Natural Step Story: Seeding a Quiet Revolution*, provides an inspirational and in-depth account of the Framework that is now being used in over 12 countries. The Natural Step is integral to our Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative where we are working with businesses, municipalities and organizations in our region to help them become more sustainable [www.atlanticsustainability.ca](http://www.atlanticsustainability.ca) More information about The Natural Step Canada can be found at [www.naturalstep.ca](http://www.naturalstep.ca)

*What would you advise educators who would like to make ESD a part of their classroom activities?*

I would encourage educators to find out more about the United Nations' Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). I would also encourage educators to find out what their schools are doing to educate students on sustainability and what their governments are doing to educate citizens on sustainability. I would also suggest that they develop partnerships with community organizations and businesses on sustainability initiatives. As well, they should use the media to promote and raise awareness about the importance of sustainability education. Finally, educators should know that the World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development will be held in Bonn, Germany, in March 2009 and they can attend to learn more and get involved.



## Resources for integrative value-based learning

*A value framework for critical thinking about social and ecological realities* **Anita L. Wenden**

Speaking at the 7<sup>th</sup> Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, held at the United Nations headquarters (4/21/2008), Evo Morales Ayma, President of Bolivia said indigenous peoples wanted to express "how to live well" within their vision of Mother Earth, which was the source of life. Living well is not possible under the current capitalist system, which sought to turn Mother Earth into a capitalist good, he added. A conversation must be held with other communities on establishing a new model for living. He, then, offered a series of "ten commandments" that he thought should underpin the new model.

The values listed in the box below are based on the Earth Charter's ethical principles. Use the questions related to each value to have students critically evaluate how the model for 'living well' proposed by the 'ten commandments' (p.8) would influence life in their communities. Then ask them to decide whether governments in their local communities should implement them and why.

### **Ecological sustainability**

How would the Earth's resources and life-support systems in your community be affected if the new model for 'living well' were implemented? Would the 'ten commandments' lead to a remediation of the harm already done to the planet in your area?

### **Nonviolence**

If the new model were implemented, what means would you expect government in your community and country to take to resolve conflict? Would physical force or aggression be used? psychological

violence? Or nonviolent means?

**Social Justice**

How would the power, wealth and resources in your community be distributed if the ‘ten commandments’ guided policy making? Would all the groups in a community benefit or not? Would their human rights be respected or violated ? Why? Why not?

**Intergenerational equity**

How would your community policies and programs, if based on the ‘ten commandments’, affect the wellbeing of future generations? Consider their effects on (1) Earth’s life support systems, (2) accessibility to a country’s resources, and (3) social stability and harmony.

**Participatory decision-making**

Would governance based on the new model for ‘living well’ provide opportunities for individuals and groups in your community to share their views on a problem or proposed solution?

**Adapted from A. Wenden, “Value based perspective development” in *Educating for a Culture of Social and Ecological Peace* (SUNY Press 2004)**

**Ten commandments to save the planet: An indigenous perspective on ‘living well’ Evo Morales, President of Bolivia**

**End the capitalist system**

The capitalist system, has encouraged unbridled economic development. The exploitation of human beings and pillaging of natural resources must end, as should wars aimed at securing access to those resources. Also, the world should end the plundering of fossil fuels; excessive consumption of goods; the accumulation of waste; as well as the egoism, regionalism and thirst for earning where the pursuit of luxury was taking place at the expense of human beings. Countries of the south were heaped with external debt, when it was the ecological debt that needed paying.

**Renounce wars**

Second, the world should denounce war, which advantages a very few. In that vein, it is time to end occupation under the pretext of "combating drugs", such as in South America, as well as searching for weapons of mass destruction. Money earmarked for war should be channeled to make reparations for damage caused to the Earth.

**A world without imperialism and colonialism**

Third, there should be a world without imperialism, where no country is dependent upon or subordinate to another. States must look for complementarity rather than engage in unfair competition with each other. Member States of the United Nations should consider the asymmetry that exists among nations and seek a way to lessen deep economic differences. Moving along those lines, the

Security Council -- with its lifelong members holding veto rights -- should be democratized.

### Right to water

Fourth, access to water should be treated as a human right, and policies allowing the privatization of water should be banned. Indigenous peoples have had a long experience of mobilizing themselves to uphold the right to water. They should put forth the idea of forming an international convention on water to guarantee it as a human right and to protect against its appropriation by a select few.

### Development of clean energies

Fifth, the world should promote clean and eco-friendly energies, as well as end the wasteful use of energy. It is understood that fossil fuels are nearing depletion, yet those who promoted biofuels in their place were making "a serious mistake". It was not right to set aside land not for the benefit of human beings, but so that a small few could operate luxurious vehicles. It was also because of biofuels that the price of rice and bread has risen; and the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are now warning that such policies must be prevented. The world should explore more sustainable forms of alternative energy, such as geothermal, solar, wind and hydro-electric power.

### Respect for Mother Earth

Sixth, there should be more respect for Mother Earth, and the indigenous movement must bring its influence to bear in fostering that attitude. The world must stop thinking of Mother Earth in the capitalist sense -- which is that of a raw material to be traded. For who could privatize or hire out his mother?

### Basic services as human rights

Seventh, it is the important that everyone gain access to basic services. Services such as education and transport should not be the preserve of private trade.

### Fighting inequalities

Eighth, it is urgent that consumption be limited to only what is necessary and what is produced locally. There is a need to end consumerism, waste and luxury. It is an irony that millions of dollars are being spent to combat obesity in one half of the globe, while the other is dying of hunger. The impending food crisis will bring an end to the free market, where countries suffering hunger are being made to export their food. There case with oil is similar, where the priority lay in selling it abroad, rather than domestically.

### Promoting diversity of cultures and economies

Ninth, it is important to promote unity and diversity of economies, and the indigenous movement should put forth a call for unity and diversity in the spirit of multilateralism.

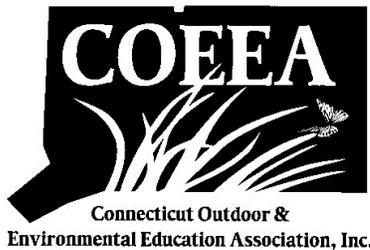
### Living well not better

Tenth, the world should live under the tenet of "trying to live well", he said, but not at the expense of others

**We must realize that ...human development is primarily about being more, not having more. Earth Charter**

## UPCOMING CONFERENCES

CONNECTICUT OUTDOOR & ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION, INC.



### 2009 COEEA CONFERENCE Sustainability Education For the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Thursday, March 19, 2009  
Central Connecticut State University, New  
Britain, CT

The Connecticut Outdoor & Environmental Education Association supports Connecticut's outdoor & environmental educators as they promote responsible environmental stewardship in formal and informal settings.

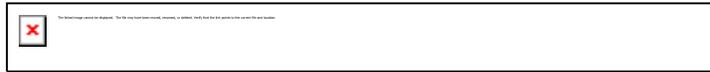
Planned panel discussions are:

- Creating Sustainable School Communities
- Make a Difference through Service Learning
- Learning Sustainability through Place Based Education
- Healthy Food for a Healthy Planet
- Connecting Local and Global Sustainability Issues

You are invited to help your fellow environmental educators broaden their horizons and discover best practices and new methods in environmental education by leading a conference workshop related to one of the panel topics.

**Deadline for submitting a proposal is December 1, 2008**

For more information on the conference and a form for submitting a proposal go to [www.coeea.org:80/](http://www.coeea.org:80/)



**You are invited to attend the 5th World Environmental Education Congress!**

The vision for this World Environmental Education Congress is Earth as our common home. Caring for this household, in which all life exists, calls for strong ecological identity, solidarity, and sound action at this critical period of the Earth's history when we need to profoundly and urgently realign human endeavour within the capacities, limits, and systems of our home. Issues like climate change remind us that environmental matters are complex, controversial, and global. They affect this entire common home of ours. Other issues such as globalization, water supply, food sovereignty, poverty, violence, and war affect all lives on earth. We expect concern to grow as pressures upon Earth's systems increase and as socio-ecological conflicts intensify.

The 5th World Environmental Education Congress invites participants from all continents to attend and to share their views and experiences. The event will be held at the Palais des Congrès/Montreal Convention Center, Quebec, Canada from May 10 to 14,2009. For more information, visit the Congress website at <http://www.5weec.uqam.ca>

## BOOKS

**Love, peace and wisdom in education: a vision for education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century** by Jing Lin is a book that is deeply spiritual and philosophical as well as holistic in its outlook. It posits that education for peace should be the top priority of schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To the author, peace entails the construction of a culture of love and respect, borne out of a realization that 'all people and all existences' (p. vii) belong to an interconnected family. She argues that the foregoing should give us the wisdom and courage to embrace a new paradigm that changes not only our mindsets but, more importantly, our ways of acting and relating with other people and with nature. She asserts that love is the hope of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This, in a nutshell, is the heart of the book's message. **To order the book contact Rowman and Littlefield Education [www.rowmaneducation.com](http://www.rowmaneducation.com)**

**The dilemmas of social democracies: overcoming obstacles to a more just world**, by Howard Richards and Joanna Swanger explores the fundamental obstacles to achieving a more just and ecologically sustainable world. They conclude that the central problem lies in the constitutive rules of capitalism, particularly the ways in which freedom, property, and rights are conceptualized. The authors contend that these constitutive rules can, however, be transformed through human action and express hope that their book will aid in this task of transformation. **To order the book contact Lexington Books [www.lexingtonbooks.com](http://www.lexingtonbooks.com)**

**The Earth belongs to everyone: A collection of articles and essays** by Alanna Hartzok, Co-Director, Earth Rights Institute, presents a large and hopeful worldview with profound possibilities for transformational action for peace, economic justice, and environmental restoration. Themes include: Democracy, Earth Rights and the Next Economy; Sharing Our Common Heritage; Land for People, Not for Profit; Financing Local to Global Public Goods; Women, Earth and Economic Power; Restructuring Economic Relationships; Economics of War and Peace. **To order the book contact Alanna Hartzok, 717-264-0957 or email [alanna@earthrights.net](mailto:alanna@earthrights.net)**

## GLOBAL SOLUTIONS LABS

Global Solutions Labs helps young people—high school and college students, as well as teachers and young professionals design solutions for global and local problems. Participants in the annual Labs:

- learn a problem solving and planning methodology, developed by Buckminster Fuller and other scientists and designers, that will be of use to you the rest of your life
- will learn about critical global problems that impact the lives of everyone in the world, as well as the opportunities associated with this problem, and what we can do to change the current situation
- work collaboratively with other participants from around the world on designing real world solutions to a critical real world problem
- are briefed by United Nations staff from UNDP, UNEP, UNICEF and other UN agencies.
- present their work to a team of UN and other experts
- receive a comprehensive digital collection of the latest reports from the UN and research organizations around the world on the state of the planet (over \$1,000 worth of reports and studies on energy, climate change, the global economy, food, and many other topics).

The **2009 Global Solutions Lab** is being held this **June 16-23, 2009** at the UN in New York and Chestnut Hill College in Philadelphia, PA. For more details about the topic of this year's lab, to register and/or to download reports of previous labs visit <http://www.designsciencelab.com>

## WEB MOVIES

The following web movies, produced by **BigPictureSmallWorld**, speak simply, understandably and inspiringly to social and ecological issues. To watch the movies listed below and others visit <http://www.bigpicturesmallworld.com>

**Climate Sayings** How serious is climate change? What do the experts think? Are there solutions—things we can do that will make a real difference?

**Eliminating Hunger** Can hunger be eliminated from the world? How? By when? What would it take? See how this eleven-pronged strategy could eliminate hunger, famine and malnutrition from the world by 2025.

**Half Full/Half Empty** Is the world in serious trouble? Are we on the verge of disaster? Or are things better than ever? See how the angle we view things at can shape our reality.

**Increasing Humanity** This movie takes a fresh approach to the critical subject of population. As its title suggests, the movie deals with the growth of population in the world, both in a quantitative and qualitative sense. It points to the “race between education and catastrophe” as more and more people, and their needs, come into the world. Can our growing capacities as a result of this increase in population win the race? As our numbers increase does our humanity—our empathy with the rest of our fellow beings also increase?

**Winning Peace<sup>2</sup>** What is war? What is peace? Released in 2004 just before the U.S. went to war in Iraq and viewed by over 1 million people in it's first month on the web, this movie looks at what war really does . . . and doesn't do, and how to win peace.

**Let's Make It So (UNEP)** Poverty is the most toxic element known to humanity. Learn about the environment and what we need to do to make it better.

**Environment in 10 Seconds (UNEP)** What happens in our environment in 10 seconds? You'll be amazed. . . . This movie was done for the United Nations Environmental Programme. It was premiered as the curtain raiser at their recent Environmental Ministers meeting at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya.

**News about civil society organizations (CSO's)**

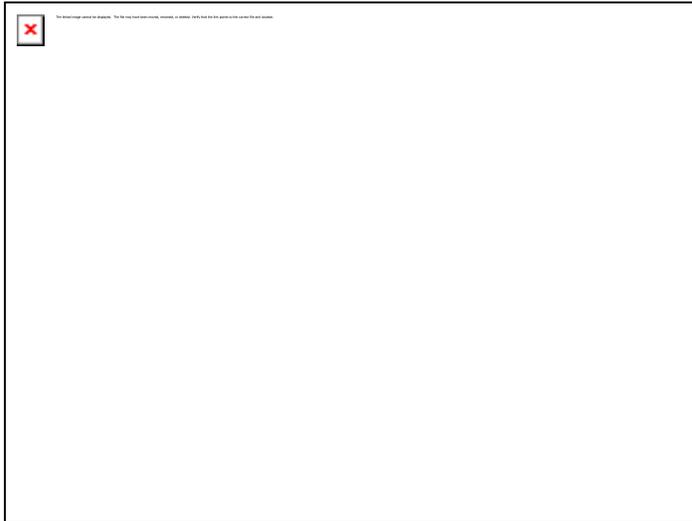
## The Global Vote

The Global Vote is a new online non-profit initiative that enhances democracy through shadow voting and polling systems. It intends to empower the world's Internet users by recording their opinions and registering their votes on the world's most pressing issues, including resolutions under consideration at the United Nations and other international organizations. They speak on behalf of their voters by disseminating voting results to these international organizations, national governments, the media, universities and NGOs. **To make your voice heard go to: [www.theglobalvote.org](http://www.theglobalvote.org) .**

## **Earth Rights Institute** The Earth belongs to everyone.

Earth Rights Institute is dedicated to securing a culture of peace and justice by establishing dynamic worldwide networks of persons of goodwill and special skill, promoting policies and programs which further democratic rights to common heritage resources, and building ecological communities. For more information visit [www.earthrights.net](http://www.earthrights.net) or email [alanna@earthrights.net](mailto:alanna@earthrights.net) or [annie@earthrights.net](mailto:annie@earthrights.net)

## Environmental Protection & Justice Action Committee



PsySR's Environmental Protection and Justice Action Committee works to advance peace and social justice by promoting sustainable use of resources, healthy habitats, and environmental justice. It is an action committee of Psychologists for Social Responsibility (PsySR) which recognizes that:

- human activities on a global scale are clearly threatening ecological systems, putting our collective global security at risk.
- global environmental devastation is driven by desperation of the world's poor, and over-consumption by the world's rich.
- unprecedented rises in human population and consumption patterns stress the planet's carrying capacity.

This year the committee is highlighting the psychological dimensions of climate change. **More information about PsySR and the Environmental Protection and Justice Action committee is available at [www.psySR.org](http://www.psySR.org)**

**Peace lies in nourishing ecological and economic democracy and nurturing diversity. Vandana Shiva**

## **Village Earth**

### **Mission**

Village Earth empowers communities to sustainably access and manage the resources needed to achieve their vision for the future by working directly with communities as allies, distributing appropriate technology information, as well as providing training, consultation and networking services to individuals, communities and organizations around the globe.

Their work is based on the following **values** and **beliefs**:

- Communities must be empowered to access and manage the resources they need to be self-sufficient and sustainable.
- Local communities have the ability to shape and create their own vision for the future, as well as the path to move toward it.
- Transparency and participatory decision-making is central to the goal of social justice and sustainability.
- Working toward ecological sustainability must be a priority for all societies to ensure peace and prosperity for all peoples.
- The diversity and differences among our constituents and our collaborators is to be appreciated and respected.

**Contact information: <http://www.globalearth.org> email [info@villageearth.org](mailto:info@villageearth.org)**

## EarthCAT - The Earth Charter Community Action Tool

The Earth Charter Action Tool (EarthCAT) is designed for use by communities interested in developing sustainability programs. Using the Earth Charter values as a guide, it provides communities with a framework that allows them to identify their priorities and preferred approaches to working towards a sustainable future. It recognizes that each community is different and that the natural and human resources, the needs and aspirations of citizens, and the social and political systems of every community create unique challenges that require unique solutions.

EarthCAT was developed by the Earth Charter Partnership for Sustainable Communities (ECPSC), which has developed two complementary resources sustainable community planning resources: EarthCAT and *Taking Action: A Workbook for Sustainable Communities*. For more information on the EarthCAT planning process and to download the EarthCAT complementary workbook visit the EarthCAT website [www.earthcat.org](http://www.earthcat.org)

### A plea and a challenge

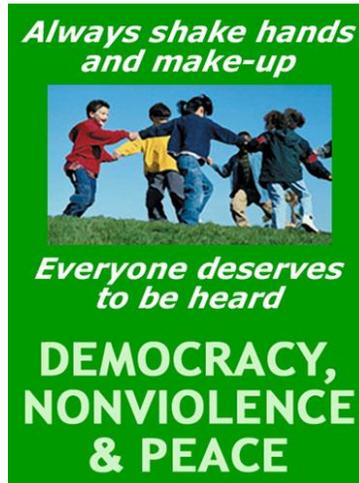
Optimism is a political act.

Entrenched interests use despair, confusion and apathy to prevent change. They encourage modes of thinking which lead us to believe that problems are insolvable, that nothing we do can matter, that the issue is too complex to present even the opportunity for change. It is a long-standing political art to sow the seeds of mistrust between those you would rule over: as Machiavelli said, tyrants do not care if they are hated, so long as those under them do not love one another. Cynicism is often seen as a rebellious attitude in Western popular culture, but, in reality, cynicism in average people is the attitude exactly most likely to conform to the desires of the powerful – cynicism is obedience.

Optimism, by contrast, especially optimism which is neither foolish nor silent, can be revolutionary. Where no one believes in a better future, despair is a logical choice, and people in despair almost never change anything. Where no one believes a better solution is possible, those benefiting from the continuation of a problem are safe. Where no one believes in the possibility of action, apathy becomes an insurmountable obstacle to reform. But introduce intelligent reasons for believing that action is possible, that better solutions are available, and that a better future can be built, and you unleash the power of people to act out of their highest principles. Shared belief in a better future is the strongest glue there is: it

creates the opportunity for us to love one another, and love is an explosive force in politics.

Great movements for social change always begin with statements of great optimism.



#### *Epe mission statement*

Founded in 1992, Earth & Peace Education Associates International (EPE) consists of a global network of educators who aim to promote the recognition of the reciprocal relationship between ecological degradation and the violation of human rights on a local, national and global level.

*Contextual sustainability*, the organizing principle underlying EPE's educational approach, defines this relationship. It assumes that the Earth is the primary context and essential foundation of all social activity and that ecological sustainability is key to achieving a culture of peace. Reciprocally, respect for human rights characterizes the social context essential to ecological sustainability.

EPE's educational activities facilitate the development of an *integrated* and *value-based* perspective on issues related to the achievement of a culture of social and ecological peace.

#### *EPE contact*

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*Contributions to Transitions*

Send contributions for the newsletter to [Wenden@rcn.com](mailto:Wenden@rcn.com), e.g.

- accounts from your region that show the link between social violence and ecological destruction or the reverse – social and ecological peace
- reports on projects working for the development of sustainable, just, nonviolent, and participatory communities
- educational resources