



The Talk is on the Table, from awareness to action.

Brief Report from C&NN's National Gathering of Regional Leaders
August 8-10, 2007

Hosted at the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum

Leave no Child Inside
The Children and Nature Network
Building a Movement to Reconnect Children and Nature

Approximately 100 people gathered in Minnesota to discuss how we might succeed in building a movement to reconnect children and nature (there were two representatives from Canada, myself and Terry Welsh from Alberta representing the Alberta Parks and Recreation Association). Attendees represented a broad cross section of individuals from academics to 'hands-on' people working directly in the field with children. We were connected by the common interest to heal the broken bond between children and nature and to create a new common sense for the good health of children today and generations to come.

The distributed materials included:

- A Brief History of the Children and Nature Movement by Richard Louv
 - The Powerful Link between Conserving Land and Preserving Health by Howard Frumkin and Richard Louv
 - Framing the Issue: What our Parents Need and Facing our Fears by the C&NN
 - What the Research Shows: A Summary by the C&NN
 - Building the Children and Nature Movement from the Ground Up: A Community Action Guide developed for the C&NN
 - Re-connecting Children and Families with Nature in BC: A draft Province-wide Approach for Reconnecting Children and Families to Nature and the Outdoors by Bob Peart
 - Pamphlets and brochures from an assortment of organizations and associations active in the children-nature element.
 - A CD of all the conference Reference and Resource Materials.
 - The C&NN website is an excellent on-going source of information. www.cnaturenet.org
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Richard Louv in his opening presentation focused on the following points: (FYI: his book has sold over 200,000 copies and is in its 15th printing)

- Our sole purpose is to get kids back outside. This is the new common sense. We need to mend that broken bond. Children don't need to be programmed, what they need is free play. This should be led by 'peer attraction', not 'peer pressure'.
- 40 hours per week in front of a screen, and when outside the activities are directed by an adult. We need to think about how we can use technology as the 'hook' to get children outside.
- We are standing on research --- there is good evidence.
- I am coming to the conclusion that the 'fear' and 'stranger danger' issue is our biggest challenge.
- Developing the movement is now the story --- not the book. We need to accelerate the movement as a whole. The electronic network exists; we need to re-establish the human network.
- We are talking about human restoration --- the outdoors is a place in the human heart to which we can go for strength and peace.
- Encouraging points:
 - Recent meeting with Clint Eastwood and key developers in California
 - The No Child Left Inside Act introduced in the Congress
 - The Children's Bill of Rights recently passed by the Governor of California
- Richard says that a 'movement moves' and his focus now is to:
 - Get kids outside now.
 - Get the movement focused, so that it leads to cultural change.
 - Find the resources (\$\$\$) to fund the movement.
 - Get access to the power people.
 - More clearly define what success looks like so change can be measured.

John Parr (Principal, Civic Results) discussed the elements of a movement (those notes follow), and a discussion followed about the status of the C&NN as a movement and where the C&NN might be in five years. Some thoughts were:

- Broad sector of people, not just the white middle class.
 - Children in nature must have a higher market value, than say, a golf course.
 - We will have reached the tipping point with a critical mass speaking to this issue...with teams of people across the country/continent being advocates for the issue.
 - We must be positive, we can create this dream.
 - We must overcome the litigious nature of our society.
 - This will not be a child issue but a society issue.
 - Instead of paddling upstream we will be navigating a fast flowing downstream.
 - The benefits need to be more evident and we need to find a way to measure them.
 - Human health <-----> Ecosystem health. Need to be connected.
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Ten Essential Ingredients of a Social Movement

What Makes Up a Movement?

A social movement is an attempt to enlist the hearts and minds to achieve significant social change, often in the face of serious opposition. Every movement is different and may go through many phases. In collaboration with Dr. Raphael Sonenshein, professor of political science at California State University, Fullerton, The Children's Partnership has analyzed movements throughout American history and has come up with 10 elements that have been part of successful, modern American movements. The 10 points are designed to be thought- and conversation provoking, not prescriptive.

Who Makes Up a Movement?

1. *A Core Constituency*

Every movement starts with a person or a group who believes so strongly in a cause, or is so deeply affected by it, that it becomes their defining identity and "obsession." Usually, they define the cause in absolute terms, assign a moral value to it, and crusade for its moral acceptance.

2. *Leaders*

In every movement one or a small handful of individuals emerges as the symbol of and chief promoter of the cause. They often have an extraordinary sense of political climate and the will of the public to embrace or reject new values.

3. *A Mass Audience*

Mass movements strive to connect the majority to their values, asserting that the movement's motives are fundamental tenets. Movements that treat the public as "other" -- either ignorant or evil--tend to stay more marginal.

4. *Opposition/ Enemies*

Movements that are based on strong interest and deeply held beliefs will have equally strong opponents. Opponents can include those whose interests will be hurt by the success of a movement or those who disagree with the values. However, enemies are important and can actually help fuel the movement.

What Is At Stake?

5. *Vital Interests at Stake*

Movements are about vital and uncompromised interest: slavery or freedom, pro-life or pro-choice, war or peace, saving or destroying the earth. Movements are often reduced to terrible threats and high hopes. Arguments about the claims may abound, but a movement has to be about something that the public thinks is truly of vital importance.

6. *Core Values*

Movements reach people through their values, by connecting their interests to their perceptions of themselves as, and as decent, moral human beings. While politics and/ or policy goals must emerge and serve as fuel and objectives, the real momentum comes

from a connection to key values like fairness, individual responsibility and community.

7. *Hidden Agendas*

Race, class, and ideology act like a riptide under the surface of many movements. These riptides can be exploited by opponents. A movement must know where it stands and be ready to counter inevitable accusations of favoritism, racism, and other hot-button name-calling.

What Makes a Movement Work?

8. *Local Action*

Movements build momentum through dozens or more local actions. The "vision" must be able to be translated into simple actionable steps that can be interpreted and taken by hundreds of people in neighborhoods and communities across the country.

9. *Acts of Symbolic Power*

While policy achievements are the lasting legacy, acts of symbolism become the historic metaphor for the movement. Symbols are flash points where the values, passions, and policy goals come together and enter the national vocabulary.

10. *Milestones*

As a movement builds, it must achieve real world accomplishments to continue. Milestones are often public policy landmarks, providing real change as well as fueling the movement.

Workshops and smaller discussion groups. A number of these discussions focused on the challenges facing us: Governance and Funding, Urban Audiences, Turf and Silos, Changing Demographics, Infrastructure and Systematic Change. Additional workshops focused more on the positive and elements that can assist us: the Medical Community, Beyond Green in Schools, the need for Core Values and Key Messages, Healthy Community Action Plans.

I attended and found the discussion about the future of the C&NN and what its role may be quite interesting. Those key points were:

- One of its strengths is as a web portal to help connect people and resources.
- Research --- be the place to find the research. Have annotated bibliographies.
- The C&NN can establish the context/messaging/concepts and then regions can implement their ideas in their own way. Try to have a uniformity of look and information. Guiding principles with shared values.
- Establish "LEED" type standards for the C&NN movement, a set of criteria that once met we can recognize and celebrate.
- We would lead in telling the story and setting the vision. Set the atmosphere by being the 'rainmaker'.
- Be the lead on three key contacts:
 - Mayors and Governors
 - Schools and Youth with media

