



## Water Education Community of Practice Launch Meeting

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# WHAT WE HEARD

Wednesday November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2012. 9:00am-3:30pm

Kerry Wood Nature Centre, Red Deer AB



*Water Education Community of Practice Launch Meeting Participants*

The Alberta Council for Environmental Education and our members would like to thank Suncor Energy and the Calgary Foundation for helping us launch the Community of Practice Initiative.



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# COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE BACKGROUND:

*“Communities of Practice are groups of people who share a passion for something, and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.” -Etienne Wenger*

Communities of Practice (CoP) are a way to formalize the informal learning structures that often develop in a workplace or field. They can develop as a result of an informal group coming together to solve a problem or share experiences on their own or they can be initiated by an organization to facilitate sharing among individuals who would benefit from coming together.

The Water Education CoP will help members of the Water based environmental education community deliver on their mission, and collaborate to advance environmental education in Alberta.

## **Potential outcomes ACEE has identified for the CoP are:**

- Meet your 'human needs' for community and networking
- Learn more about other organizations and programs in your Community of Practice
- Work together to identify common barriers to your work – and build bridges over these barriers
- Identify your professional learning needs, and meet those needs
- See where programs are complementary to – or in competition to – one another, and identify education 'gaps'
- Provide better support to teachers and other audiences
- Create efficiencies and synergies in your work. This might include working with other groups to coordinate activities and programs, forming partnerships, etc.
- Develop coordinated approaches to the funding community



One CoP launch meeting participant identified that in order to improve water education in Alberta we had to “Take time to create new ideas.” We certainly agree with that and aim to do so with this new CoP.

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# LAUNCH MEETING

## Quick Agenda:

Time	Activity	Results
9:30	-Welcome and Introductions -Introduction to ACEE -What is a CoP -Break	Page 3-4
11:00	Flip Chart Brainstorming sessions on functions of our work	Page 4-9
12:00	Lunch and Nature walk	
1:00pm	Card process: What do we as a community of Practice need to do to advance Water Education in Alberta?	Page 10-11
3:00pm	Next Steps	Page 12-13

## Suggested Outcomes for our Launch Meeting:

- Establish new and foster existing relationships with your Water Education colleagues and peers
- Learn about various Water Education organizations: what they do, where they operate, and what is (and is not) being done in water education in Alberta.
- Identify barriers to your work, and propose bridges over those barriers.
- Help create a vision and plan for the Water Education Community of Practice – and identify your role within it

## GETTING TO KNOW WHO IS IN THE ROOM

Despite snow fall warnings and slippery highway conditions a group of 19 Water Educators arrived ready to lay the foundation for this provincial initiative. Through a series of questions were we moved around the room to demonstrate our answers we learned that:

- Attendees were almost all paddlers, and the minority did much fishing,
- Only 2 had been part of a community of practice prior to this one
- Most were from central/southern Alberta
- We were evenly split between those who worked with youth, adults, or the 'general public'
- Most of us worked on a variety of water topics (rather than just one such as conservation)
- We ALL wanted to meet other educators
- We ALL wanted to learn more about other educational organizations and programs
- We ALL wanted to more successful at engaging new audiences
- Most would welcome opportunities for additional funding
- We ALL thought that this CoP was going to be BIG and wanted to be a part of it!

## GETTING TO KNOW WHO IS IN THE ROOM...CONTINUED

We also were able to learn that we have a very interested group of individuals whose skills and interests vary widely, from Irish dance to bee-keeping to trumpet players to gold medal white water kayakers. What an amazing group of people!

### Attendees:

- Alberta Council for Environmental Education- Christina Pickles, Gareth Thomson
- Alberta Parks, Kananaskis Country- Andrea Barnes, Vicki Perkins
- Alberta Lake Management Society- Arin MacFarlane Dyer, Bradley Peter
- Battle River Watershed Alliance- Nathalie Stanley
- Beaver River Watershed Alliance- Harry Keess
- Bow River Basin Council- Mike Murray
- CAWST (Centre for Affordable Water and Sanitation Technology)- Michelle McDonald
- City of Red Deer- Ryszard Kozlowski
- Cows and Fish- Kerri O'Shaughnessy
- Government of Alberta, ESRD- Glenn Gustafson, Phil Boehme
- Red Deer River Watershed Alliance- Joey Temple
- Strathcona County- Vanessa Higgins
- Trout Unlimited Canada- Lynn Robb
- University of Alberta- Gaylene Halter
- Waterlution- Azkaa Rahman

### With Regrets (registered but prevented from attending):

- RiverWatch- Cal Kullman
- Alberta WaterSMART- Dave Guichon
- City of Calgary- Michelle Mueller
- Green Calgary- Heather Robertson
- Inside Education- Lauren Strangward
- GOA, ESRD- Catherine Jorstead, Shannon Yacyshyn, Robyn Saude, Janine Higgins, Greg Nelson, Monica Dahl, Cheryl Dash
- North Saskatchewan River Keepers- Glenn Isaac
- Old Man Watershed Council- Andrea Vaxvick
- Sustainability Resources Ltd.- Lisa Fox



# FLIP CHART BRAINSTORMING SESSION

Our collective mind is more powerful than any one mind alone. It is in that spirit that we are launching a Water Education Community of Practice, as well as why we used this flip chart brainstorming session. In groups of 3 people, our participants were asked to ponder and discuss one of the following 6 questions and record their answers on the flip chart. After a few minutes the group moved and the next group added to their record. Comments that were repeated have been mark with an asterisk\*. After 20 minutes everyone had contributed their thoughts on the following questions:

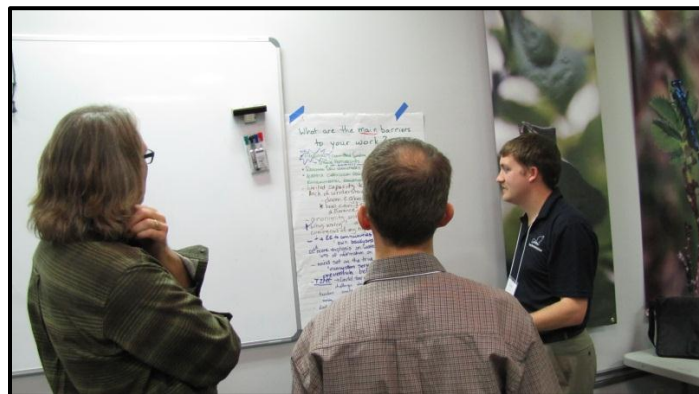
## 1. WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT YOUR WORK?

### WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT WATER EDUCATION IN ALBERTA?

Identified Theme	Participant Answers
Our Connection To Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We're all connected whether we know it or not.</li> <li>• Water is our most basic need</li> <li>• Water can be defined very well by areas of land</li> <li>• Alberta has a diverse range of watersheds and stressors</li> <li>• We are all Stakeholders-we all live in a watershed</li> <li>• General acceptance of environmental principals- people will actively engage in conversation</li> <li>• Everyone loves water! Drink, Play, Swim, Fish!</li> <li>• A spiritual connection to water that <u>everyone</u> can relate too (makes a good entry point)</li> <li>• It's a personal passion, and to others 'ethical'</li> <li>• Finding common ground with non-believers and completely unaware</li> <li>• It creates links to industries (ie Oil Sands)</li> <li>• Water is a unifying environmental issue- you can use it to protect/manage other ecosystems</li> <li>• It is a solvable problem</li> </ul>
For the Love of Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To educate others in how much of a blessing and opportunity we have with water and how we can take care of it</li> <li>• Growing area...always opportunity for involvement</li> <li>• Love working with youth and inspiring youth</li> <li>• Water education ripples out to lots of other Environmental issues</li> <li>• Seeing an incremental positive change in attitudes towards water/environment</li> <li>• Passionate, like-minded people in positions to generate/facilitate change</li> <li>• Fusion of ideas, working with people from various backgrounds</li> <li>• Seeing the "ah-ha" moments in people</li> <li>• Water is dynamic- it changes every day- So much to learn!</li> <li>• Water topic is exciting to all ages, particularly youth</li> <li>• There is a demand for it</li> </ul>

## 2. WHAT ARE THE MAIN BARRIERS TO YOUR WORK?

Identified Theme	Participant Answers
Audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reaching new audiences- organizational members, teachers, new Canadians, ESL students etc</li> <li>• Limited capacity to teach general public</li> <li>• Tie EE to communities where Albertan's live. 'In your own backyard' 'right thing to do'</li> </ul>
Formal Education Drawbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta curriculum requires more emphasis in environmental education including rivers and streams</li> <li>• Time= limited with students and teachers – creates challenges when it comes to changing behaviours</li> <li>• Teachers sometimes have negative attitude. "No money, can't do field trips"</li> </ul>
Community Disengagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anonymity within 'your' community</li> <li>• *Community lacking understanding of water issues               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Doom and Gloom</li> <li>○ *How can one person make a difference?</li> <li>○ No visible crises and general apathy</li> <li>○ *Why worry? As long as there is water coming out of my taps...</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Lack of demand from certain audiences, particularly households- no incentive.</li> <li>• Not a lot of incentives for change and penalties for lack of changes (ie high water use or in-stream cattle watering)</li> <li>• Mind set on true value of water. Ecosystem services with water prevention before fix</li> </ul>
Organizational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *Funding (committed funding sources) Long term **</li> <li>• *Reaching new volunteers</li> <li>• Need more information on water quality. Already information on water quantity. (?) misconception?</li> <li>• <b>*Lack of coordinated efforts amongst organizations</b></li> <li>• Short term 'project' thinking</li> </ul>



### 3. WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EXCELLENT WATER EDUCATION?

Identified Theme	Participant Answers
<b>Facilitator</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enthusiasm, Charisma</li> <li>• Engagement</li> <li>• *Building a personal connection with audience to water- adaptable delivery</li> <li>• **Storytelling</li> <li>• Need to speak to their level</li> <li>• *Passionate</li> <li>• Objective</li> <li>• Empathetic</li> <li>• Positive</li> <li>• Innovative</li> <li>• Persuasive</li> </ul>
<b>Program Characteristics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gets people talking</li> <li>• Its memorable</li> <li>• *Experiential- hands on               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ May need to overcome funding barriers for this</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Accurate knowledge and facts.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Facts are interesting/unique/weird</li> </ul> </li> <li>• *Link water to land</li> <li>• Freedom to explore vs. really structured</li> <li>• *FUN</li> <li>• Engaging all the senses</li> <li>• Adaptability</li> <li>• Relevant to place</li> <li>• Connected to curriculum (formal education)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ But not entirely driven by it</li> <li>○ Cross curricular approach</li> <li>○ Add knowledge and skills aspects</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Leads to stewardship- give them a chance to apply their learning</li> <li>• *Has a purpose/ measureable results that are measured and evaluated</li> <li>• *covers both water quality and quantity</li> <li>• Covers a spectrum of resources (other programs and organizations)</li> <li>• Testing/piloting resources</li> <li>• Inquiry based so participants come up with solutions</li> <li>• Multilingual (across sectors)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ability to translate complex systems</li> <li>○ Systems approach</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Assets based approach</li> <li>• *Current- with current events integrated</li> <li>• Measureable- measures change in behaviours and attitudes</li> <li>• Teaches 'taking action'</li> <li>• Incorporating traditional knowledge</li> <li>• Student-led inquiring process- not 'sage on the stage' teaching style</li> </ul>

#### 4. HOW CAN THIS COP HELP GENERATE MORE FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR WATER EDUCATION IN ALBERTA?

Identified Theme	Participant Answers
Finding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *CoP can help inventory existing funding resources and determine existing grantees (and internal budgets)</li> <li>• Create a database of resources</li> <li>• Individuals- find them. 75% fundraising in Canada is from them</li> <li>• On-line micro donation (regular)</li> </ul>
Applying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• **Coordinated approach to funders demonstrating efficiencies and synergies in operations and programs.</li> <li>• Coordinate between organizations to create a funding package that covers bigger perspective</li> <li>• Organize committees that network for organizations</li> <li>• Develop funding dedicated to water as a universal theme ex. Blue water fund.</li> <li>• Show value of Environmental Education work = greater support               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Relate funds provided clearly to impact</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Opportunity to connect the private sector with support of water education. Invite possible donor to CoP to inform them of work being done. (scholarship)</li> <li>• Have ambassador or champion to promote the cause</li> <li>• Build and nurture trust               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ *Face to face relationship ongoing/dynamic</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Get the audience to help generate funds and coach them in how to fundraise</li> </ul>
Changing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-orient existing provincial government funding or create new policies that support water education and financing</li> <li>• Help break down silos (eliminate over-inflated egos)</li> </ul>





## 5. HOW DO WE MOVE WATER EDUCATION LEARNERS TO ACTION?

Identified Theme	Participant Answers
<b>Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *Mentor –facilitate their ideas in project set-up               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “be the guide on the side, on the sage on the stage”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Empower teachers; give them skills</li> <li>• Build/up multiple *visits</li> <li>• *Provide resources</li> <li>• *Make it more accessible</li> <li>• *Follow-up- on site/ hands on/ realistic</li> <li>• *Build confidence- it can be done. *Share examples of success</li> <li>• Give them responsibility/ ownership</li> <li>• Find barriers and remove them</li> <li>• Learn from failures and share experiences</li> <li>• Assist to recognize/realize and express their narrative</li> <li>• Provide hands on experience- meaningful make it relevant to them</li> </ul>
<b>Incentives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cash Incentive \$ (for schools and students) and use</li> <li>• *Prizes</li> <li>• *Recognition- sense of pride.</li> <li>• Awards ie. Badges, Gardening awards for LID?’</li> <li>• Visual outcomes- pride</li> <li>• Sell the sizzle- (using senses)</li> <li>• *Demonstrate results of taking action               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ *Focus on facts of positive impact</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Program development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fun</li> <li>• Make it personal (interconnect with them) and meaningful- WHY</li> <li>• Project based learning</li> <li>• Get water quality and quantity into our cultural mindset</li> <li>• *Balance between science and social responsibility</li> <li>• Understanding spectrum of meaningful actions-All skills are useful</li> <li>• Identify champions, keeners and doers and get them excited</li> </ul>



## 6. HOW DO WE ENGAGE PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT HERE IN OUR WATER EDUCATION COP?

Identified Theme	Participant Answers
Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *Talk to 5 friends- have you heard of....?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ CoP testimonials</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Secretariat list-serve development</li> <li>• Connecting networks</li> <li>• Events that tie people together               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ bike tour/raft/trip/float along the river</li> <li>○ Lake days with food, activities, entertainment</li> <li>○ Family fun water festivals with schools, parks, rivers</li> <li>○ Web based initiatives including Shoreline clean-up and Rivers to Oceans week with CNF and tie to other organizations issues</li> </ul> </li> <li>• *Video conferencing/skype/live feed/webinar software/conference calls</li> <li>• Create computer buddies or accountability partners</li> <li>• Nathalie beating the drum</li> </ul>
Collaborate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BRBC has a watershed stewardship coordinating committee. Share resources, Casino initiative?</li> <li>• *Break into regional groups to meet occasionally</li> <li>• Have meetings around the province</li> <li>• Encouraging attendance at Earth Matters conference- bigger event</li> <li>• Watershed 'toolkits' user generated website</li> </ul>
Incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guest speakers and Professional development</li> <li>• *Be clear about the value of a CoP               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Demonstrate value</li> <li>○ Potential partners</li> </ul> </li> <li>• *Document success stories (drives accountability) in a central website and a way of sharing</li> <li>• Corporate education tied to action</li> </ul>

### WHY WE LIKED THIS ACTIVITY

"IT SHOWS WE HAVE COMMON EXPECTATIONS"

"THIS ACTIVITY HELPS US TO BUILD ON EACH OTHERS IDEAS"

"THERE IS A LOT OF VALUE IN THE CONTENT PROVIDED HERE"

"THERE ARE SO MANY CONNECTIONS SHOWN BETWEEN OUR PROGRAMS AND IDEAS"

These questions and conclusions helped us brainstorm the importance and potential of water education. These ideas resurface in our next activity where we discuss **"What do we as a Community of Practice need to do to advance Water Education in Alberta?"** Many of these ideas are then repeated, however it is worth noting them here as CoP members can use them to guide our work as they suggest potential focus area for the coming years.

# WHAT DO WE AS A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE NEED TO DO TO ADVANCE WATER EDUCATION IN ALBERTA?

This question was the focus of the afternoon using the card process. First individually, then in small groups, then as a large group we identified and grouped what “we need to do”. Some of these are short term, some are long term, but all will lead to the success of our CoP and will help guide our next steps.

## ANSWER:

<b>Professional Development/Knowledge Building (internal)</b>	<b>Actions Collaborations (individuals)</b>	<b>Promotion and communication</b>	<b>Information Sharing (internal to CoP)</b>	<b>Visionary Exercise for CoP (collective)</b>
Incorporate PD into the CoP experience. (Speaker may be internal or external)	Act on connections made today, tomorrow	Increase awareness of resources, agencies, and initiatives (water education for everyone!)	Share success and failures to learn from each other (-Kerri)	Give the CoP a name and define its role
Develop Resources Library Ie. Photos, details for educators	Take time to create new ideas (-Kerri)	Linking Municipalities with CoP messages and services	Develop CoP newsletter to share info (resources, grants, rants, challenges, successes)	Develop standardized water messages
Establish a virtual space to connect with others in the CoP	Collaborate to achieve (org’n) goals	Demonstrating cumulative impact of ALL our actions, programs (for grants)	We spread all CoP successes news internally and externally (not just your own).	Identify collective outcomes and how to measure success
Increase our Knowledge of water resources in Alberta	Enable partners to support “action”	Be in the public eye (media, commun. Events)	Build list of organizational strengths to share	Take initiative to connect regionally
		Building connections among and between water users (field trip, direct experience)	Celebrate our Success!	Coordinate our efforts to improve impact and reduce overlap. (topics, audiences) (-Arin Dyer)
			Recognize water champions and replicate (success stories)	Collaboratively work together to maximize funding

# NEXT STEPS

Lead by the Card Process, these are our next steps, including who will be taking the lead and a timeline. Opportunities for leadership have been identified and highlighted in yellow. Please contact Nathalie if we can fill your name into a blank.

Action	Details	Lead, Timeline
Create Outcome Document of Launch meeting	To capture the launch meeting activities and outcomes	Nathalie By November 28 <sup>th</sup>
Use responses from launch meeting evaluation to determine ongoing communication medias. Use them.	What technologies are most used and appreciated by the group which we can utilize to stay in contact?	Nathalie/Christina Determine by December 6 <sup>th</sup>
Take actions on Connections made today	Get in contact with those you met and can collaborate with.	ALL Today!
Share connections and collaborations with Nathalie	In order to promote our CoP and share our successes within the group, keep Nathalie informed on steps taken.	ALL As they happen. Goal: to have two success stories by January.
Set up resource share space.	Explore some technologies to do this.	Nathalie and Christiana By December 6 <sup>th</sup>
Create database to track CoP participants, contacts, organizations, mandates, programs, resources etc. "CoP Contact and Resources database"	1. Create draft form to send out for approval of CoP participants. Ie. Is there anything else that should be included in database? 2. Send database form out to all CoP members to fill out	Nathalie and Christiana 1. Send draft by Dec 6 <sup>th</sup> . 2. Send form out by Dec 13 <sup>th</sup> .
Set up an email network (Listserve)	As a way for the group to share information, updates	Nathalie/Christina By December 13 <sup>th</sup> .
Send Nathalie Biographical information to complete "CoP Contact and Resources database" mentioned above.	Fill out in as much detail as possible	ALL Completed form and sent back to Nathalie by Dec 20 <sup>th</sup> or Jan 4 <sup>th</sup> if you are legitimately on vacation!
Create one page CoP handout	In order to share details of our work with our workplaces, other educators, and beyond.	Nathalie Complete by Dec 20 <sup>th</sup> .
Design CoP one page Handout to look professional	Nathalie will supply content.	Christina will hire designer to create
Meet as regional groups	To build on the work of this meeting	Regional Leaders: Kerri, Glen, Vickki, Joey, Cheryl, Lynn. "____(Your name here)____"
Meet at Earth Matters Conference		ALL, lead: Christina (Nathalie will be unable to attend)
Create best practices on EE based on our flip chart brainstorm	Details are included in this doc. Just need someone to make handout!	"____(Your name here)____"

## NEXT STEPS

### TECHNOLOGIES TO EXPLORE:

- Dropbox
- Facebook
- Google groups/G+
- Email
- Phone number

The initial technologies used will be determined by the launch meeting evaluation form, and will change over time based on the needs of the CoP.

### WHAT DO WE AS ORGANIZATIONS NEED TO MAKE US MORE SUCCESSFUL?

These were the needs identified by the group.	This is how the CoP has collectively decided to bridge those needs.
“Coordination and networking. Support will move us forward”	We have hired a CoP coordinator- Nathalie Stanley who’s focus is to support Water Educators in Alberta to network and then collaborate on our work.
“Sustainability of the group”	The CoP Currently has funding for at least two years and will continue based on its needs. Our coordinator will ensure its continued support and success, with the participation of the group.
“Sharing contact info of CoP group” “Sharing short ideas, program info and successes, resources, bringing in experts” “Sharing gives and gains”	The CoP Contact and Resources database will be a launching point to address these needs. Its fulfilment will be measured by the details the CoP members fill out their own information, and then to the extent they use it.
“Water Education database where you can search by theme”	The Alberta Council for Environmental Education has the Encana Resource Database were educational organizations and their programs from across the province are listed. All CoP members will be encouraged to contribute to this database. We will also be able to use the CoP Contact and Resources database for this need.
Unified collective voice (various ways)	We will create a one page handout to describe our work. Other ways?

**For more information** on the Water Education Community of Practice, please visit the Alberta Council for Environmental Education website at [www.abcee.org](http://www.abcee.org) or contact the Coordinator Nathalie Stanley via email at [nathaliekstanley@gmail.com](mailto:nathaliekstanley@gmail.com) or at the Battle River Watershed Alliance office at 780-672-0276.

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## RECOGNITION

We would like to recognize the support The Alberta Community Development program whose facilitation services were utilized for this meeting. Specifically, thanks to our facilitator Kim Rowe whose intelligence, imagination and sense of humour helped make this event a success.



### ACEE and CoPs

Bringing environmental education stakeholders together has always been an important role for ACEE. When ACEE was created, 6 roles were laid out and the creation of Communities of Practice have a strong fit with numbers 2,4, and 5.

1. **Champion environmental education.** ACEE will be a voice for the advancement of environmental education, speaking in support of the need for EE and its role in a changing society.
2. **Convene stakeholders.** ACEE will convene the EE community, encouraging a variety of strategic conversations, liaisons, networking, actions, and synergistic collaborations between EE groups.
3. **Facilitate leadership.** ACEE will help create, clarify, and coordinate leadership within the environmental education community.
4. **Build networks.** ACEE will develop, encourage and support networks that facilitate the exchange of information and provide opportunities for collaboration within the Albertan EE community.
5. **Increase capacity.** ACEE will develop partnerships and mechanisms to build capacity for, and help ensure, the continual improvement of environmental education groups.
6. **Connect the community.** ACEE will work with all interested EE providers to promote EE resources, services, and events to the widest possible audience of Albertan educators; and connect Albertan environmental education efforts to relevant national and international networks, resources, and activities.



Funding for this initiative is provided by:

