



September 9, 2017

World Environmental Education Congress

Your Royal Highness, Princess Lalla Hasnaa of Morocco, Mr. Zandvliet, Institute for Environmental Learning, Canada and Mr. Mario Salomone, World Environmental Education Congress Network, Conference Co-Chairs, environmental educators, ladies and gentlemen;

Ca me fait plaisir de participer à ce Congrès mondial d'éducation environnement de discussion sur l'éducation et le développement durable. It is a great honour to join you this morning at the World Environmental Education Congress.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the long history, the wisdom and the culture of the Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh and the Squamish peoples of the Coast Salish Nation on whose traditional territory we are being hosted this morning.

Some years ago, May 2013 I believe, Richard Louv author of *The Nature Principle* and *Last Child in the Woods* and I both attended Robert Bateman's Birthday Party. When he spoke after dinner Richard said, "We must create a vision of the future for our young people which is much more than sustainable." After all he queried, "Would you want a sustainable marriage? No we want much more. We must develop a vision of the future as seen through the eyes of Robert Bateman." For any not be familiar with Robert Bateman, wildlife artist, his incredible work portrays his dedication to the natural world throughout his life and over many continents in incredibly beautiful detail.

I have used this quote so often because I believe that this truly is where we fall short. We must clearly define, and create a vision of a post-carbon future where a clean and green economy allows us to engender thriving communities based on healthy land with vigorous people who are truly connected.



This picture may not always be as serene as nature; the environment, comes in all shades and may be as painful as 400 beached whales dying on a coast in New Zealand, or the devastation from fires and floods. Unfortunately as we are witnessing the climate is becoming ever more erratic with greater events around the world. The planet is responding in very predictable ways to our careless stewardship.

When 2015 was declared the International year of soils by the United Nations. This provided a wonderful opportunity for me to talk to students where ever I went about the precious nature of the dirt beneath our feet. The importance of soil to our future is vital. Most of us give very little or no thought to soil or if we do think about it at all, we tend to dismiss it as that dirty stuff beneath our feet, what we wipe on the carpet as we enter the house. But in fact healthy soils are the foundation upon which civilizations rest.

Soils provide many services to mankind. I think we all realize that it is the medium in which we grow the greatest majority (95%) of our foods and fibre. But in addition healthy soils perform many ecosystem services that we rely on such as supporting the water cycle, the solar cycle, the mineral and the carbon cycle. And healthy soil is where much of our carbon is stored. I read lately that “pollution today keeps the lungs of soil working overtime!” Did you know that there are more living organisms in one table spoon of good soil than there are humans on earth? Or that it takes about 500 years to naturally develop 1 centimetre of new soil? Two more hectares of soil are sealed under expanding cities every minute, around the world. These are just a few facts that cause us to take a closer look at how we treat the dirt beneath our feet.

There is a quote I love by Charles Kellogg Soil Scientist who in 1938 said; “Do civilizations fail because the soils fail to produce or does soil fail only when people living on it no longer know how to manage their civilization?” I believe that education needs to start from the ground up.



During my tenure as Lieutenant Governor, my priority program Stewards of the Future, was an effort to get young learners out on the land and into their communities to investigate and learn about the issues that will concern future leaders; issues concerning agriculture, forestry, fishery, energy, water, and biodiversity. My vision is to get students at the high school level into their communities to explore the source of their energy, their food and their drinking water and to meet with local elected leaders and to ask questions.

As a farmer I have spent a great deal of my life on the land and I know that the only thing that I can manage is my own behaviour. With changes brought about by climate shifts, our young people will be challenged to be more adaptable than previous generations. They will have to manage their use of our precious resources and adapt to greater climate variability than most of us have ever experienced. These shifts will continue to increase the gap between our urban and rural populations.

Ranchers or farmers are in the business of harvesting sunshine, the most renewable resource on earth! On our ranch we harvest grass because we are in the interior where we have wonderful native grasslands that fatten livestock as well as any grain. Cows are the tools we use to harvest these plants and turn them into a product for human consumption with very little fossil fuel input.

We cannot grow trees everywhere on this planet but we have 5 billion acres of hope because we have grasslands the world over. Plants, our carbon pumps, split off the oxygen and store carbon. Ruminants are required for the maintenance of healthy plants otherwise eventually the plant material is removed through fire which releases that carbon back into the air. This has been all too evident in British Columbia this year.

Secure, accessible, healthy supplies of water, food and energy are essential requirements for human dignity and well-being. These elements all depend on thriving biodiversity supported by properly functioning ecosystems. So many ecosystem services provided by nature are taken for granted. When we interrupt those services and have to depend on engineering it becomes very



costly. The complex interdependence of these factors, known at the Climate Nexus is the subject of a new text by Dr. Jon O’Riordan and Robert William Sandford, a small text with a large impact.

And how, you might ask, does my passion for the land connect to my new role as Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia. The connection is this: The best protector of the land is peace and stability for nothing devastates like war, civil unrest and uncertainty. I believe that we in Canada are most fortunate as our constitutional monarchy has provided the stability which allows our nation to flourish.

The work of the Institute for Environmental Learning is becoming ever more crucial. As we watch in awe the path of storms such as Irma and as our own province reels from fires it becomes ever more evident that we must wake up and change behaviour. We must promote a new vision for communities that are resourceful and resilient.

As the representative of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada and on behalf of all British Columbians, thank you for your ground breaking work. I wish you much success during your deliberations here in Vancouver.