

# Chalk Talk

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## Letter from the Editor

Dear Subscribers,

**“There is a grandeur in this view of life...endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been and are being evolved.” — Charles Darwin, *On The Origin of the Species*, 1850**



Charles Darwin demonstrated a boyhood passion and keen eye for nature, obsessed with collecting beetles and reading science books. Not everyone, however, appreciated the young Darwin's zeal. His father, for one, was unimpressed by his son's

'odd' pursuits, convinced that they would one day lead him to "disgrace". In fact, Darwin's exceptional powers of observation would lead to the formulation of the Theory of Evolution which would change forever how we understood the connectivity of all life.



My son and I recently visited the Royal Ontario Museum's Darwin Exhibit - [The Evolution Revolution](#) - which chronicles Darwin's life from boy biologist/botanist to world travelling scientist. Equipped with only rudimentary tools, Darwin sailed on the wooden ship, The Beagle, to the Galapagos, where he patiently, methodically observed the Islands' plant and animal life, taking note, too, of the geological influences and differences in fossil remains. The

Darwin Exhibit, full of original artifacts, includes letters, handwritten notebooks, scientific specimens, maps, photos, and his iconic magnifying glass.



This week's issue features environmental programs that encourage students to observe their world and participate in finding solutions to our eco-challenges. CoEd Communications is dedicated to supporting the important work of teachers by providing resources on a range of topics for the classroom. We invite you to visit our website at [4edu.ca](http://4edu.ca) to view the many free teachers' resources on offer.

[Let us know what you think!](#)

*Mary Kovack*

Mary Kovack

## The Biosphère, Environment Museum



**Environment Canada's Biosphère**, located in Montréal, Quebec, is one of Canada's premier venues for information, education and awareness about the major environmental issues related to water, air, climate change, sustainable development and responsible consumption.

As an environment museum, the Biosphère offers permanent and temporary exhibitions, events for the general public, and guided activities that appeal to youth and adults alike. In its role as a national centre of expertise in environmental education and engagement, the Biosphère works with partners across Canada to develop and evaluate educational programs related to the environment.

**The Biosphère also offers a youth program** to school groups across Canada. The Youth Program comprises a variety of educational activities that can be carried out at the museum, in the classroom, in the field or through distance education. To view the **2007-2008 National Youth Program brochure** (pictured at right), [click here](#).



All Youth Program activities are aimed at encouraging young people to act in harmony with their natural and built environments. Through play, experimentation and creation, students will develop their teamwork, co-operation and problem-solving skills, and learn to apply them to environmental protection.

For more information on **specific activities** and **distance learning**, see **Website of the Week** below.

[\[Source: Environment Canada's Biosphère\]](#)

***In the long history of humankind (and animal kind, too) those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed. — Charles Darwin, Scientist, 1809-1882***

## ROCK YOUR PLANET! DISTANCE LEARNING ACTIVITIES OFFERED AS PART OF ENVIRONMENT CANADA'S BIOSPHERE – YOUTH PROGRAM

Environment Canada's Biosphère has offered its popular [Youth Program](#) in Montréal since 1995. Now it offers a variety of classroom activities that are both entertaining and educational, to elementary schools and high schools across Canada.

Launched in 2007, the Biosphère's newest **Environmental Distance Learning** activity, "[A Change in the Air](#)," is ideal for grades 8 to 12. Schools in Toronto, Halifax and Ottawa, among others, have already enjoyed this **live and interactive** educational activity (available in English and French), which is curriculum-based and uses videoconferencing technology. "**A Change in the Air**" promotes classroom discussion of the very latest scientific information about air and climate change and their impacts on Canada and its regions. The general objective of the activity is to make students more aware of and proactive about their environment.



The videoconference format offers students **direct access** to an expert on subjects such as weather, climate and climate change. These interactive activities, with animated graphics, are broadcast live from the Biosphère's state-of-the-art studio, which includes a chroma-key wall.

The current **Environmental Distance Learning** activities—and new ones that are being developed—are **free of charge!** Users must, however, meet the technical requirement of being able to receive videoconferences in a room that can hold one, two or three classes (up to 100 students). It is also possible to link several schools from different regions of Canada at the same time, which allows students to exchange ideas about clean air and climate change that relate specifically to their regions and lives.



The availability, length and content of presentations can be adjusted to individual school schedules. They can last for one or two class periods, that is, from 50 to 75 minutes. **The activity is available until May 31 and will be offered again from September 15.** For more information about Environmental Distance Learning and to book a videoconference educational activity, educators are invited to:

- write to [edl-edc.biosphere@ec.gc.ca](mailto:edl-edc.biosphere@ec.gc.ca);
- call 514-496-8282 or 1-866-487-8282 (toll free); or
- reserve [online](#).

### Environmental Education Training Opportunities for Teachers — Autumn 2008!

The Biosphère is developing an **ONLINE** training program for teachers that will help them better understand the objectives of environmental education and the many pedagogical strategies that form the bases of environmental decision making, problem solving, etc.

Watch for this activity on the Biosphère's website starting this autumn.

### THE BIOSPHERE invites Educators to plan an Eco-Field Trip



**Adopt a River** is a field project co-ordinated by the Comité de valorisation de la rivière Beauport (CVRB)—Beauport River enhancement committee—with the support of the Biosphère. The project encourages students aged 10 to 15 to evaluate water quality in a freshwater river in their community by identifying benthic macroinvertebrates and analyzing six physico-chemical and bacteriological parameters. This project helps students to understand their environment and to identify actions they can take to improve it.

The CVRB and its partners have jointly produced a classroom **Participation Guide** to prepare students for the field trips, and a **Teacher's Guide** that includes logistical planning information. Training for teachers and scientific support are also provided by the CVRB. To learn more about [Adopt a River](#) and how your classroom can participate, contact [administration@cvrbc.gc.ca](mailto:administration@cvrbc.gc.ca)

## Did you know —

Environment Canada's Biosphère opened on June 5, 1995, World Environment Day? A showcase for environmental education, the sphere was originally the site of the United States Pavilion at Expo 67. Since then, it has been restored and now includes a new building inside the dome, the environment museum. The Biosphère's mission, in keeping with the philosophy of its visionary creator, Buckminster Fuller (pictured at right), is to instill a positive and responsible attitude toward the environment in the public by providing them with tools and concrete solutions.



### Education News and Related Articles

[Human activity and the environment: Climate change in Canada, 1990 to 2005](#) — *The Daily*, Statistics Canada, Tuesday, April 22, 2008

"Impacts of climate change: Canada getting warmer — Canada has warmed in recent decades. The trend between 1948 and 2007 shows a 1.4 °C increase in annual temperatures in Canada. Temperature increases are greatest in the Yukon/North British Columbia Mountains region and the Mackenzie District of the Northwest Territories...Canada's emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs), major contributors to climate change, rose 25% between 1990 and 2005. However, without increases in energy efficiency, the increase in emissions would have been even greater.... This compilation of the most recent statistics related to climate change in Canada is published in the 2007 and 2008 edition of **Human Activity and the Environment**, Statistics Canada's compendium of information on how Canadians interact with their environment."

[Green technology not abreast of challenge: Report](#) — THE CANADIAN PRESS, TheStar.com, April 2/08

The Canadian co-author of a new report [['Dangerous Assumptions'](#)] on climate change says the world badly underestimates the technological advances needed to curb greenhouse-gas emissions. McGill University economics professor Christopher Green says Canada and other countries are putting too much emphasis on the politics of climate change. He says it would be better to focus on developing new technology to stabilize greenhouse gases, rather than fixating on set dates for emissions reductions."

[Arctic ice melting fast in summer sun; Last year, only 13% of new layer survived melt](#) — Peter Calamai, Science Reporter, TheStar.com, April 22, 2008

"New Arctic sea ice is now so perilously thin on average that it melts under the sunshine of clear summer skies it once could survive, American researchers conclude in a study published today...Research has linked the thinning of Arctic ice to warmer average temperatures caused by rising levels of greenhouse gases from human activities. Readings from U.S. submarines indicate a widespread reduction in sea ice thickness of 40 per cent since 1960."

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