

## **Royal Roads University**

### **MA program in Environmental Education and Communication**

The fundamental model for graduate programs at Royal Roads University is the cohort and a fixed set of courses. For the most part, RRU students do not get electives: the program offers what the faculty feel are important domains worth spending time in and exploring. The basic idea of our MA program in Environmental Education and Communication (EEC) was conceptualized in 2002/2003 by Drs. Milt McClaren and Richard Kool. The idea behind the program was, first, to integrate education and communication, and second, to bring into the program the kinds of things that we felt were really needed by EEC practitioners but were missing from existing programs.

While we are no longer teaching everything that we started out with in 2003, I believe that our initial conception has stood the test of time. As the name of the program implies, we have serious courses in *education*, in *communication* and in *environmental studies* along with the mandatory research course. But it is the other things that we offer that I think differentiates our program from the other fine Canadian graduate programs in EE.

Our students take a course in *design*, as virtually all of us design communication and education products. For many years, scholars have talked about the importance of systems understanding for the ecoliterate population, and we have had, from the outset, a very serious course on *systems*: not about systems thinking, but about the nature of complex systems, hard and soft systems, modelling systems, systems dynamics and more. And following on systems, we have a course that looks at the topic of *worldviews and ethics*. While environmental ethics are taught in a number of grad programs, the topic of worldviews seems to be rarely raised explicitly and we have devoted a course that focuses on this topic from the outset of the program. More recently, we've added a course on the *psychological dimensions* of EEC. The course comes at the topic from a psycho-social approach, which is to say that it recognizes the centrality of experience, emotion and affect in addition to cognitive and behavioral processes.

Given this description of the program, it is fair to say that our program takes seriously the concept of transdisciplinary; an approach that sees critical knowledge creation and mobilization resulting from work across a variety of levels, from the level of what "is", which could be the basic science level, to the level of what "can be", which might involve design, systems, psychology etc., to the question of what "should be", which is where the work on ethics and worldviews is germane.

This is what we have come to at RRU. At this time of uncertainty as to what we are to do with the world as it is, it is unlikely any one answer, any one program, contains all the answers. Each program is a hypothesis, an experiment, which its creators put out into the world to see if it can do more good than harm. What we need now is many experiments and the willingness to learn from them all.

Richard Kool