



“I THINK BEING HONEST AND TRUTHFUL TO OUR COMMUNITY IS KEY” - CHRIS WHITE OCT 2017



“I HAVE NEVER FELT SO MUCH SUPPORT .... GIVEN ME INSIGHT THAT I DIDN'T HAVE BEFORE” - STAFF MEMBER JUL 2017



“WE ARE PACKING UP AGAIN...ONLY A FEW MORE DAYS OF SCHLEPING BY IVAN-VON SCHELP-A-LOT” - RON SKENE AUG 2017

## SEASON’S GREETINGS FROM EDUCO!

### Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to you and your family!



We hope you have many plans for good cheer, traditions and maybe, just maybe, an ‘at home’ dish party!

We’re pleased to deliver this “Christmas Edition State of the Union” from Educo.

Christmas is a time of joy and peace, and if there ever was a year to dig deep to find those states of being ... this has been it.

As you may already be aware, the entire Educo organization and community were presented more obstacles and opportunities to learn from than ever before! Many Educo-ites experienced extreme adversity and discovered the fortitude necessary to make it through!

### One theme seemed to dictate 2017, and that was the force of renewal.

Twenty-seventeen began with the conclusion of a fundraiser to plant the figurative seeds (and literal seedlings) of the future of Educo. The leadership torch was passed from the wonderful outgoing Executive Stephanie Gobin and eventually to the well known Educo-ite Ron Skene. In the spring, young tree seedlings were planted at the site, and a renewed vision/mission were presented at the Annual General Meeting.

As the fresh spring team began their season, they found the site in desperate need of upgrades, updates and in some cases complete overhauls of infrastructure. Simply put, the elements and near 50 years of use have taken its toll. In addition, experience was stretched to the limit during busy school programming with the force of an old site and new staff. This became evident when Educo was unable to meet the needs and expectations of returning teachers and parents hoping for “the Educo experience” they had come to know and love over the years.

Not to be deterred, staff focused on growth, honesty, collaboration and learned what living in community is all about. From there, they pulled together to keep Educo functioning for the transition into summer programs - packed with the anticipation of mountain trips and big adventures!



Summer arrived, along with seasoned staff; as students surely became more eager and nervous for their trips! On July 7th, three days before 36 Junior boys and girls were set to arrive, an aggressive wild-fire called “The Gustafsen” erupted, spreading to within 3km of Educo’s back porch. Always adaptable, the location for Juniors was quickly moved to 100 Mile town proper; the dedicated team of staff and volunteers spent innumerable hours moving and preparing to launch Juniors from the improvised location. That was, until the entire town of 100 Mile was evacuated on mere hours notice...

Nobody knew it at the time, but from that moment on, all summer programs- and the future of Educo itself- were in peril. Roughly 140 students were affected by the 5 courses cancelled. Staff were laid off with no known return date. A site full of history, memories and irreplaceable items was on the brink of burning to a crisp. Most importantly, parents plans and investments were jeopardized, and students life changing experiences were in limbo. The cancellation of the entire fall schedule was a difficult and abrupt conclusion to the 2017 season. The impact of the loss of revenue was not fathomed until the fires were out in September, and tough decisions were the result. The staff was reduced to zero and the Executive Director became a Volunteer. Everyone was exhausted. In a normal

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year the volunteer Board might meet around 5 times, this year the board officially met 12 times (with many more sub-meetings and hours on the phone) and called 7 of those meetings, emergency in nature.

Eventually, after what felt like forever, fall did arrive. The fires went to sleep, and all the people of Educo 2017 summer were afforded some rest and time to find a 'little bit of solitude and a whole lot of gratitude'.

**Now in winter there must be a silver-lining, surrounding us, to ponder:** what do wildfires teach us about life, the nature of the universe and helping Educo stay alive and thrive? How can we ensure students continue to have access to a rich "Educo experience"?

Fire is a destructive force, it damages, destroys, and does not discriminate in its path. But fire also signals renewal, soon the destruction of old creates space for the new. Burned forests quickly give way to grass, flowers, shrubs and eventually a young forest, full of new life and sometimes even a completely different ecosystem. This is a good metaphor for where Educo finds itself now.

At the end of 2016 Educo held a "Fund-and-Community Raiser" to put the seeds of its own future into the hands of the community through the "the forest for the future" campaign. Then, 2017 devastated Educo as it has never experienced before. We experienced many internal destructive forces and external damages along-side the fires. The site, staff and our way of doing business were challenged - landing directly in these paths of destruction. But luckily- the seeds of the future of Educo were already spread amongst the community, and are probably being kept safe alongside the lint in your pockets! "The Forest of the Future" is with you and "The Community of Heart" is still beating...

**Those *au courant* with Educo are called to remember the 'creative cycle'.** This lesson speaks to creative processes passing through spring, summer, fall and winter "seasons". It seems very clear now that Educo is in the winter season, as it enters a sort of "hibernation" phase.

The winter season, you may associate with words such as: reflection, darkness, stoic, sleeping, dreaming, stillness, cold, rumination etc. *This winter - Educo must call forth the fortitude and leadership of each and every person who believes in, and holds the future of Educo to be a possibility.* We need you to imagine, we challenge you to be patient, and we dare you to hear what your own wisdom says in the quiet of listening. We hope you will find the time for stillness and reflection, and most of all, we hope you will believe!

**This holiday, the best gift you can give Educo is to dream together.**

Begin new conversations with old friends, old conversations with new friends.

Pick-up where you left off or say something radically new. Remember the spirit of Educo and let your spirit-soar!

In January 2018 we hope you will join us to deeply explore: *the renewal of Educo.*

The Educo Board will be formally engaging with the broader community to share the realities and vision for the future. But more importantly we want to tap the knowledge within the community to leverage the past history and present reality into the future possibilities for Educo. Stay tuned in January for this engagement process and mark your calendar for an in person gathering February 3-4th 2018 hosted in Abbotsford at the Edenvale Centre. Reach out to [info@educo.ca](mailto:info@educo.ca) at any time to share your thoughts and concerns, RSVP or to get on the mailing list. Stay tuned for the launch of the first initiative coming to your inbox early January 2018.

On behalf of the volunteer Directors of Educo have a splendid holiday season!

The first wild fire called "the Gustafsen" spread within a few km's of the back porch

