

TGIF Taking Great Ideas Forward

Improving Northern Capital - Sustainable Development in the Northern Tier

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the author and do not reflect positions of organizations with which he is affiliated.

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“Whether you believe you can, or whether you believe you can't, you are absolutely right.”

-Henry Ford-

MEETINGS and EVENTS:

Links will provide additional information. Dates for recent additions are in **bold**.

<i>What</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Where</i>
Inventors and Entrepreneurs Club	June 7 th	5:30 PM	Iron River Community Center
Climate Warming Lecture	June 7 th	7:00 PM	UW - Superior
BCEDC Board Meeting	June 11 th	10 AM – noon	Washburn Library
2007 Entrepreneur's Conference	June. 12-13	All day	Milwaukee
Aquaculture Field Day & Vendor Fair	June 14 – 15	All Day	Bayfield & Red Cliff - NADF
Inland Sea Kaya Symposium	June 14-17	All Day	Washburn WI
Midwest Renewable Energy Fair	June 15-17	All Day	Custer, WI
Northwest Wisconsin Lakes Conference & Workshops	June 21 & 22	All Day	Telemark Lodge, Cable
Pie & Politics	June 28 th	Evening	Big Top Chautauqua
Lake Superior Day	July 15 th	All Day	Lake Superior Basin
Great Lakes Restoration Conference	Sept 6-8	All Day	Chicago

PLEASE NOTE: The **Midwest Renewable Energy Fair** is held in Custer, WI, not as previously listed in Amherst, WI. I am intent on making a day trip to the Fair on Friday, June 15th. My van will accommodate a few extra passengers. If you are interested in joining me, please call.

HIGH PERFORMANCE SCHOOLS

School reform has focused on No Child Left Behind. However, there is a movement afoot that may be less well publicized but could have a large impact on learning. The movement is to establish standards for school construction and rehabilitation that dovetails with certification of Green Buildings.

A recent [article in Education Week](#) provided examples and rationale for the nation-wide emphasis on construction of new green schools. Currently 300 schools are asking for certification. **Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)** certification has migrated the concept of green buildings from schools as industrial sites (interesting in light of last week's reference in TGIF to industrial-age schools). The [US Green Building Council](#) has provided specifications for [Green Schools](#) with environmentally sound construction standards more appropriate to learning environments than to manufacturing environments.

Teachers mostly teach in schools. An important key may be to build places where teachers really want to go every morning. This means places that are physically attractive and comfortable, intellectually stimulating, emotionally engaging and spiritually uplifting. Schools are environments for learning in no small part because of what teachers contribute to the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual domains of education. In most people's minds, school is a synonym for education. If the school environment is resource rich, both teaching and learning are enhanced.

[The Council of Educational Facility Planners \(CEFPI\)](#) should be an exemplar for the construction of new school buildings. Perusal of its Web site revealed their recognition of the impact of building amenities on teachers, *"... the positive effect the building environment may have on student achievement and on enhancing teacher morale – the people who really influence the success of these young learners."* It is time to acknowledge that high performing, healthy, safe and sustainable school facilities are highly connected to learning.

With declining enrollments, our Bayfield County schools are physically aging and not likely to be replaced anytime soon. What can be done to retrofit our existing schools? How do schools already strapped for funding turn important dollars for learning support to dollars for environmental support? Creative, innovative solutions are clearly needed.

Washburn schools may represent dramatic examples of possibilities. Given the communities commitment to environmental stewardship through adoption of **The Natural Step** principles and commitment to becoming an eco-municipality, one could imagine Washburn as a leader in moving an ordinary school building to a community of learners committed to both greening the architecture and greening the curriculum, which to me means thinking about how learning is a foundation to achieving sustainability.

We do have one exciting possibility for new school-building construction. Potential for use of the (former) **Ashland Agriculture Research Station** Land & Buildings is being questioned and will (hopefully) soon be discussed and debated as prelude to action. I have personally found the suggested comprehensive regional high school for the site to be worthy of further discussion. I would extend this discussion to include consideration for a center for life-long learning and education research. A 260 acre campus for education research and development could be a

powerful addition to the region if the putative research theme is gaining insights and perspectives on how the learning industry can be transformed into an example of rigorous learning appropriate to an Age of Sustainability; an example of a truly Learning Organization committed to learning about how we support our own survival.

Building a laboratory for learning based on authentic experience should be explored. Such exploration should demand a robust community effort supported by a multidisciplinary army of professionals. It may be with some hubris that I believe our Northern Tier may be better equipped for this mission than just about anyplace else on our tiny orb as it hurtles through space and time.

Seeking out best practices and finding solutions to improve and enhance learning environments should be a top priority. Using conclusions from learning research should be a matter of daily consideration. Finding and understanding those environments that don't support learning is also important. It may be uncomfortable to find examples of dysfunctional environments in our current schools; but, until we acknowledge local problems and challenges with tough questions we will be deprived of learning opportunities.

Learning systems that support understanding of natural ecosystems as well as human social systems including politics, economics, and education are, fully and finally, essential to survival. It is hard for me to understand a more compelling reason to understand the interlocking spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical domains of the environment in which education occurs.

CEFPI says that schools should be (or become) “sustainable spaces for life-long learning.” Imagine the 260 acres of the AARS becoming a campus for a life-long learning facilities capable of attracting the best and the brightest not only from our contiguous counties but from an increasingly flat world – that includes Madison and Mankato. The lock on the door to high performance may be best opened with a key based on distance learning technology. Digital technology is a portal to both listening to and informing our world. High performance can happen in the Northern Tier.

LIGHTER SIDE:

from **Patrick Lenon**:

This is a certifiably non-original story I tell to all math majors I encounter: One mathematician was showing his new theorem to another. The colleague pointed at the chalkboard and asked how the theorem went from one step to the next. The first mathematician said, “That's obvious.” The second went to a second blackboard, spent an hour filling it up with complex calculations, then stepped back and said, “You're right, it IS obvious.”

Take care and have a great weekend!

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Bruce Lindgren is Principal of [B.Lindgren CONSULTING](#). The consulting practice serves small business, local government, school districts and non-profits providing support for research, grant development, technical writing, marketing support and project management. Bruce brings his background in biological sciences, education, small business and media technology to generate and implement ideas contributing solutions to mission critical challenges.

In addition Bruce maintains the following affiliations:

[Bayfield County Economic Development Corporation](#), (BCEDC) *Director*

[Inland Sea Society](#), (ISS) *Director*

[Lake Superior Binational Forum](#), (LSBF) *US Delegation Co-Chair*

[Raindrop Garden Gallery](#), (RGG) *Co-owner*

[IDEA Consortium LLC](#), *Owner*

[Chequamegon Institute, Inc.](#) *Initial Registered Agent*

[Coalition for Eco-Industrial Development](#), (CEID) *Work Group Member*

[Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Investment Board](#), (WIB) *Member*

The encircled fractal triangle represents an integrated cluster of seven ideas – economics, ecology, equity, ethics, experience, education and energy – that may be considered a core for sustainability studies. Bruce is available to present illustrated lectures and facilitate discussions about Industrial Ecology, Sustainable Development and the Sustainability Revolution.