

Brink Expeditions

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Organization: Brink Expeditions
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A) How did your organization first hear about the Earth Charter?

In planning the Brink Expedition, the Expedition Coordinator first heard about the Earth Charter while living in London during 2000. Other members of the Brink Expedition Team heard about the Earth Charter prior to the 2001 Asia Pacific Earth Charter Conference in Brisbane, Australia.

B) Tell us about the project/program that you are working on with the Earth Charter:

i) How did it get started?

The Brink Expedition was developed by Kendon Glass as a way to take positive social and environmental messages around the world. The whole point of the Brink Expedition has been to bring these sorts of issues into mainstream awareness – through technology (internet), media (radio, documentary), schools (curriculum) and sport (cricket). It was a result of more than 2 years of intensive planning, research, co-ordination, sponsorship negotiation and curriculum planning.

ii) What are its objectives?

Along with the general goals of raising the awareness of social and environmental issues, the Brink Expedition is also fundraising for the humanitarian organisation Oxfam Community Aid Abroad and will also be supporting the educational aims of The Earth Charter. The International Cricket Council's Development Program - the 'Spirit of Cricket' - is being promoted as well, with the Brink Boys brandishing a cricket bat wherever they go.

The Expedition endeavours to travel through 30 countries using human power and the natural elements, to highlight the need to reduce the use of fossil fuels.

iii) How long has it been going on for?

The Brink Expedition began on May 3, 2003 and will continue until January 26, 2006 when the Expedition Team arrive back in Sydney, Australia. Following the completion of the Expedition itself, the Team will continue to work with the media, schools and NGOs to raise awareness of social and environmental issues.

iv) Who are the participants and how many people does it affect?

Kendon and Ben Glass, two brothers from Brisbane Australia, are the members of the Brink Expedition Team currently travelling through South America, while back in Australia the Brink Expedition Education Team is co-ordinated by Louise Erbacher. The School Room of the Brink website currently includes 45 schools from Australia, Venezuela, Chile, Argentina and Brazil – either following the Brink Expedition through journals, studying the Brink Curriculum materials that are available online, or communicating with other schools through the Penpal Community. Every community in each of the 30 countries visited by the Brink Expedition Team as part of their journey will become part of the whole experience.

v) Exactly how is the Earth Charter being used within it?

The Brink Curriculum covers 9 Hotspots - issues of social and environmental concern. Each of these hotspots – Indigenous peoples of the Americas, Ocean Care, Global Warming, Understanding Cultures, Fairer Trade, Endangered Species, Disappearing Forests and Indigenous Australians – carefully links back to the relevant Principles of the Earth Charter in the Curriculum Modules. The very first Curriculum Module – “The Brink Expedition and the Earth Charter” explores the Earth Charter and outlines the understanding that the Expedition itself is an example of the Earth Charter in action.

As the Brink Expedition Team visits a community, they hope to be able to communicate with those residents the message of the Earth Charter and will spend time in schools to discuss the Earth Charter and the Brink hotspots. Before moving onto the next community, they hope to be able to contribute to the Earth Charter Youth Initiative – A Blooming World – by helping to plant native trees.

All schools registering with the Brink School Room receive a School Pack, containing the Earth Charter, the Earth Charter for Children and the UNESCO CD Rom – “Teaching and Learning for a Sustainable Future” as well as other Brink materials.

vi) What are your plans for expanding/going forward with this project?

Once more schools register with the Brink School Room and once the Expedition Team begin to move through other countries, we hope to be able to gain more support from the wider community. Once this has been achieved, we are then able to encourage more and more people to come up with their own plan for the Earth Charter in action – the Brink Expedition will hopefully provide the inspiration for some people to begin working towards a better future.

Having already gained the support of the Public and Private Education Departments in Queensland, Australia, we hope to be able to gain support nationally and internationally from educational institutions and NGOs as they help to provide resources and information to encourage students and the general public to become more involved.

The footage for the documentary will be put together so that the story of the Brink Expedition can be shown on TV and sent to different networks around the world.

vii) Have you noticed its impact/positive effect?

Already we have received feedback from schools that have been involved with the Brink Expedition – parents and teachers are amazed at the way their children have engaged with the topics – they now have a deeper awareness of the issues we face at present and are motivated to do something about those issues. They are keen to continue following the story of the Brink Expedition via the website and the journals and are eager to communicate with children in other countries.

The story of the Brink Expedition made its way through to television, radio and newspapers here in Australia and people who would not necessarily be aware or concerned about social and environmental issues are beginning to take notice because they have been attracted to the adventure of the Expedition itself.

viii) Has there been any attempts to evaluate it?

We are constantly on the lookout to make improvements to the Brink Expedition – to the website, to communication and interaction with schools, etc. Already some schools have contacted us to comment on ways that we can increase interaction with students to maximize their engagement in the issues.

ix) Is there any additional information you want to tell us that may not have been captured by the questions above?

The entire Brink Organisation is run by volunteers.

C) Please also write a brief “story” about why you work with the Earth Charter and how it is useful to you or inspires you in this work

Having always been interested in social and environmental issues, it has always been a difficult task for me to divide my time and energy between the two main fields. When I first heard about the Earth Charter in November 2001, I was overwhelmed to realise that there was something out there, supported by people all around the world, that connected all the issues and pointed out the need for interdependence, cooperation and understanding in order to reach solutions to those issues. Hearing all the personal stories of during the Asia Pacific Earth Charter Conference in Brisbane in 2001 gave me a very real opportunity to see that the Earth Charter was not just a flat document with a series of vague principles. Instead, it was a living document that inspired people to take action on so many different levels.

Working in the field of education, I am also continually searching for ways to encourage my students to become more aware of the world around them and for them to understand that they have a role to play in the future. The Earth Charter is a very valuable tool that helps people to see that we are all part of a much bigger picture and we all need to work together.

D) Do you have any short quotes about the Earth Charter – one phrase or sentence that is striking and memorable.

“It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness” (Adlai Stevenson?)

“The Earth Charter is about being and doing. We can talk and talk and talk and discuss all the things that we should be doing to solve the problems of the world, but it doesn’t mean anything if we don’t start working on the solutions, if we don’t start taking action, if our thinking does not start to turn around” (Alison Steel, Treasurer, Queensland Earth Charter Committee)

“The Earth Charter is a series of words, phrases and principles that each individual person needs to transform into values or actions” (Noel Preston, Deputy Chair, Queensland Earth Charter Committee)