

An International Expedition Carrying the Charter's Message; *The Brink Expedition, AUSTRALIA*

Background

The plan for the Brink Expedition started in 2001, when two friends decided to combine their interest in traveling around the world and promoting a message for a more sustainable way of life. They mobilized a group of volunteers to work together on the logistics and funding for such an expedition. Together, they planned a 50,000 km. trip through some of the most difficult terrain and extreme weather on the planet, all the time attempting to use mainly human power and the natural elements, such as wind and sun.

When planning the Brink Expedition, the members decided to use the Earth Charter as the basis for the educational goals of the Expedition. They entered into a partnership with the Queensland Earth Charter Committee, which recognized the Brink Expedition as an

opportunity to transform the values and principles of the Earth Charter into action. Using the Earth Charter as a framework for the creation of environmental and social justice curriculum modules, Brink provides educators and students with a real life adventure that energises the learning process.

Aim

The aim of the Brink Expedition is to bring social and environmental issues into mainstream awareness – through technology, media, schools and sport. More specifically, as the Expedition travels through new countries, it visits a number of schools with the goal of actively involving teachers and students in the creation of a more sustainable future through the development of curriculum materials and online resources.



Coconut highway in Brazil

Participants

The Brink Organisation consists of 2 expedition team members – Kendon and Ben Glass, and one Education Co-ordinator – Louise Erbacher – all participating as volunteers. A team of curriculum writers to develop 9 curriculum modules are also involved. A range of non-government organizations participate on the periphery to offer resource support in relation to particular social and environmental issues. It is anticipated that by October 2006, there will be at least 300 schools participating in the project.

Timeframe

Planning and fundraising for the trip began in 2001, well in advance of the departure date. The 1,000 day journey started with the Brink Expedition Team's departure in May 2003, with the anticipated completion of the journey and the development of the materials extended until October 2006. Beyond that date, it is hoped that the materials that have been developed will continue to be used by schools and organizations all over the world.



School in Rio Grande

Description

As the Brink Expedition Team visits selected communities in the countries they travel through, they communicate the message of the Earth Charter and spend time in schools to discuss the Charter and issues of social and environmental concern. All schools registering with the Brink School Room receive a School Pack, containing the Earth Charter, a children's adaptation of the Earth Charter and a UNESCO CD-Rom – *Teaching and Learning for a Sustainable Future* – as well as other Brink materials. The School Room of the Brink website currently includes 65 schools from Australia, USA, Venezuela, Chile, Argentina, Kazakhstan, Spain and Sweden.

The Brink Curriculum covers nine "Hotspots", or issues of social and environmental concern. Each of these hotspots carefully links back to the relevant principles of the Earth Charter. The very first curriculum module - "The Brink Expedition and the Earth Charter" explores the Earth Charter and explains how the Expedition itself is an example of the Earth Charter in action. The other Hotspots include:

- Ocean Care, Global Warming
- Indigenous peoples of the Americas
- Understanding Cultures
- Fairer Trade
- Endangered Species
- Disappearing Forests
- Indigenous Australians

THE ROUTE

Americas

Venezuela, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina

Atlantic Traverse

Azores Islands

Europe

Spain, France, Italy, Greece, Turkey

The Middle East

Iran

Central Asia

Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Tibet

South East Asia

Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia

Australasia

Australia

Funding

The Expedition was able to secure a number of individual and organizational sponsors, many supplying in-kind support, from bikes to laptop computers. Grant funding was secured and used

to pay a team of curriculum writers to develop nine curriculum modules to be used by at least 70 schools. A number of volunteers made significant in-kind contributions too.



Bike man, and writing on the wall

Results

The story of the Brink Expedition has made its way onto television, radio and newspapers in Australia, Argentina, Chile and Spain. People who would not necessarily be aware of, or concerned about social and environmental issues are beginning to take notice because they have been attracted to the adventure of the Expedition itself. Having already gained the support of the Education Department in Queensland, Australia, the Brink Organisation is working towards developing relationships with educational institutions across Australia and around the world, in order to shift education for sustainability into mainstream curriculum.

In terms of the use of the Brink curriculum materials in schools, Brink has been able to track this via school registrations and their contributions to the Brink website through emails and discussion forums. The responses from students have been particularly positive in terms of their interest and motivation for learning more about the issues. Another positive impact of the Brink Expedition is the way in

which schools are connecting with other schools.

Conclusion

The Brink website has closely documented the journey as it unfolds. Students are able to see that there are people all around the world who are working towards creating a more sustainable



Sant Joan School in Mallorca

future, helping them to see that they are part of a huge community of active global citizens. Additionally, the Brink Expedition encourages awareness and a respect for the natural environment, while emphasizing the students' role as active global citizens.

By integrating technology and adventure into a real-life context, the Brink project is delivering a progressive form of education that excites and inspires young imaginations, acting as a platform for further investigation and learning.

This case was directly drawn from the following sources:

- www.brinkx.org accessed on September 26, 2005
- Earth Charter Award application by Louise Erbacher
- Earth Charter Teacher's Guidebook