



Reconnections and New Directions

the first
international gathering
of Kurt Hahn-inspired organizations



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What do Outward Bound, the United World Colleges, the Round Square Association of Schools and the Duke of Edinburgh Awards all have in common? They are all educational organizations which embrace the concept of “educating the whole person” and were started or inspired by Kurt Hahn and his educational philosophy.

In recognition of these national and international links, the Canadian operations of these four organizations jointly hosted the first ever Kurt Hahn Leadership conference called “Reconnections and New Directions,” held at the Lester B. Pearson College of the Pacific in June of 2003. This was a very significant occasion, because it was the first time these four organizations had ever gathered to celebrate their common roots. The conference was an enormous success with over 100 international delegates in attendance including Liz Cunningham, Kurt Hahn’s grand-niece, and HRH Prince Andrew, chair of the Outward Bound UK Trust, who attended the conference for the first two days and provided the opening keynote presentation.

The conference objectives were:

- to increase the connections between the four organizations;
- to promote discussion of the relevance of Kurt Hahn’s educational philosophy today and in the future;
- to look at the challenges the four organizations face, such as relevance, fundraising, governance, transference, and enrolment, and discuss strategies to collectively deal with them;
- to inspire enough enthusiasm and interest to hold another conference in a few years.

Three streams of delegates attended from the four organizations: students, teachers/staff, and board members and executive-level staff. A number of delegates from outside the four organizations attended as well, who are either involved with or running programs based on Hahnian educational ideals.

Were the objectives of the conference met? Yes, indeed! All who attended felt that the conference was valuable in stimulating new ideas, forging new connections and informing people of ways they can work together within their own countries and internationally. As one presenter put it, the conference was like the “flirting stage” in a relationship when individuals are getting to know one another.

Now, the next step is to continue the connections. A transitional committee has been struck to ensure follow-up on the commitments made at the conference, in addition to assisting the new planning committee in preparing for the next Reconnections conference to be held in two years. Some possibilities for conference locations are India, Australia or Singapore. Stay tuned for updates as we move forward from this exciting first step!

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