



**Celebrating 50 years of
the IB at La Châtaigneraie**

**Conrad Hughes:
The Inaugural Interview**

**Yesterday, today
and tomorrow:
Pregny – 1969-2023**



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IMPRESSUM

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Children running in the forest at La Grande Boissière

A WORD FROM THE DG



Dear Ecolint community,

Welcome to another edition of *Echo*, the Foundation's Magazine. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the editors and content managers of this journal for its crisp style, energetic message and consistent alignment with our values as the world's first international school, dedicated to an education for peace. Ecolint alumni come from different walks of life and occupy different stations in their professional work, but they all have one thing in common: a belief that it is through cooperation, inclusion and friendship that we can come together to face the challenges and opportunities that lie before us as one humanity.

This edition of *Echo* focuses on sustainable development.

Our school has a unique and highly significant relationship with UNESCO, whose International Bureau of Education was founded just one year after our school by members of the Rousseau Institute (*Institut Jean-Jacques Rousseau*). A roadmap for education is articulated well in the 2021 UNESCO white paper entitled *Reimagining our Futures Together: A new social contract for education*. The argument made in that paper is that we need to rewire the education system through its entire structure, from teacher training to assessment, to address planetary problems

such as the coarsening of political discourse, ideological polarisation, war, continued discrimination and prejudice. However, the number one challenge facing all of us, identified by the youth as their primary concern, is climate change.

It has become impossible for even the most rigid and disbelieving sceptic to deny that human behaviour – in particular, the behaviour of those who live in so-called developed countries – is damaging planet Earth to the point of no return. Much of this has to do with *laissez-faire* politics, the colossal profit margins sought by a small group of very powerful multinationals, and the industries that we have developed over the last 60 years, which require levels of energy that we can simply no longer allow ourselves to use.

Ecolint stands with UNESCO in our fight against climate change. We will do what we can to reduce carbon emissions, so that by 2050 we have a planet that is regenerating and not dying.

Ecolint is increasing the amount of attention given to sustainability in our curriculum design, our collective institutional behaviour, and our systems and processes.

At the beginning of this school year, every staff member and student committed himself or herself to one sustainable development goal. I invite you, dear reader, to do the same: once you have read this preface, step back for a few minutes and think of one sustainable development goal that you will commit to in your life: perhaps something simple that involves reducing your energy or water use every day. If we come together and make an effort, each of us contributing just a small quotient, the difference across the planet could be extraordinary.

Thank you for your commitment to our values, and for holding high the Ecolint flag wherever you are on our fragile, beautiful home: planet Earth.

Conrad Hughes
Director General

NEWS AND VIEWS

LA GRANDE BOISSIÈRE CAMPUS CLEAN-UP INITIATIVE

Sustainability has become one of the main focus areas at Ecolint. Last May, La Grande Boissière Year 10 students took the Year 3s by the hand as they joined forces for a campus clean-up. Coming together to make a positive impact on their school community, they learned valuable lessons about sustainability while bringing about a cleaner environment. The Year 10 students provided garbage bags and gloves to the little ones and together they scoured the forest for litter.

An important aspect of this initiative was to have younger students interacting with teenagers, with a view to fostering social and emotional development. By observing

and learning from their older peers, Year 3 environmentalists looked up to Year 10 students as role models exemplifying positive social behaviours, empathy, and emotional intelligence.

Beyond the immediate goal of cleaning up the forest, this activity provided valuable educational benefits for both groups of students. The teenagers took on leadership roles, guiding and coaching our younger students. They encouraged their peers to be more mindful of their actions and how they impact the environment. Year 3 students learned about the role they can play in keeping their surroundings clean and creating a more sustainable

world. By working together and setting the example for their school community, these students have certainly inspired others to become global citizens with the courage and capacity to create together a just and joyful tomorrow.



TAKING SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS BEYOND THE CAMPUS

No fewer than 59 courageous and dedicated volunteers – including random passers-by – took part in June's beach clean-up organised by Campus des Nations student Anaya.

Braving the hot temperatures and armed with gloves and litter pickers, the group scoured Geneva's Baby Plage for several hours. In total, they rid the beach of:

- Around 1500 cigarette butts
- 30 plastic bottles
- 18 glass bottles
- 35 aluminium cans
- 150 bottle lids
- 15 corks
- as well as a number of litter pickers, big pieces of bamboo and a bicycle seat.

We are proud of this huge collective effort and to see how our students are leading the way on matters of sustainability.

Launched in 2019 by Anaya, the Geneva Beach Clean-up initiative has had several successful editions and continued even throughout the Covid pandemic.

More details about the beach clean-up initiative are [available here](#).

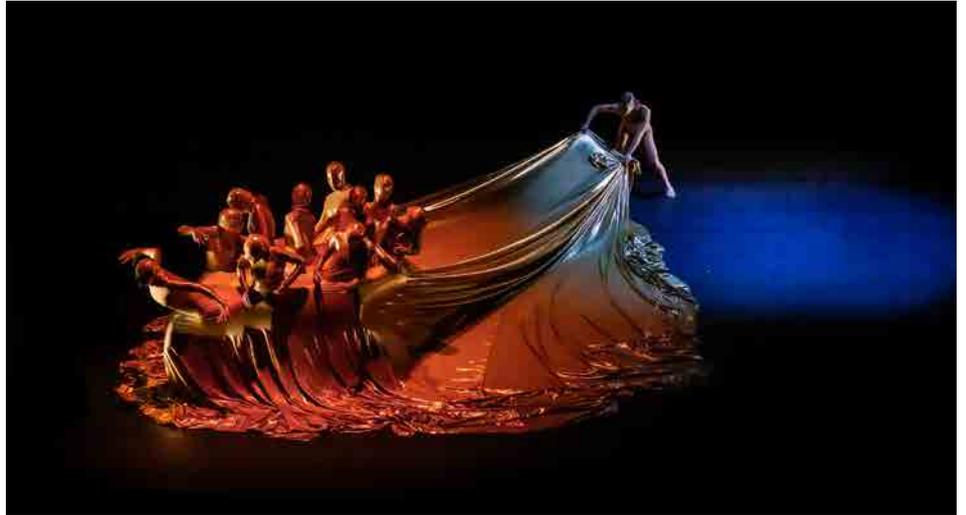


SOUTENIR LES ARTS POUR UN LENDEMAIN JUSTE ET JOYEUX

Le Centre des arts de l'Ecolint, depuis son ouverture en 2014, offre un programme pédagogique et culturel engagé, axé sur la transmission des arts et la promotion des nouvelles technologies.

Situé sur le campus de La Grande Boissière, son objectif principal est de dynamiser l'enseignement des arts au sein de l'école, tout en servant de passerelle entre l'Ecolint et la communauté locale et internationale de Genève.

Le Centre des arts propose une variété d'événements et d'activités, tels que des spectacles, des expositions, des conférences, des projections et des résidences artistiques. Sa programmation diversifiée et sa collaboration avec des artistes locaux et internationaux ont pour but d'accompagner les cursus pédagogiques de l'Ecolint. Il offre ainsi un lieu favorisant la transmission et le partage interdisciplinaire, au cœur de Genève.



Le Cercle des amis et amies du Centre des arts de l'Ecolint est une initiative visant à soutenir et à promouvoir le programme pédagogique et culturel du Centre des arts.

DEVENEZ AMI ET AMIE !

En adhérant au Cercle, les membres contribuent à maintenir la qualité, la dynamique et la créativité des activités proposées par le Centre, et renforcent les liens entre l'école et la communauté artistique locale et internationale.

Soutenir le Centre des arts représente aussi un réel engagement pour favoriser l'art et l'éducation dans son innovation, pour la jeune génération.

Si vous souhaitez devenir membre et bénéficier de nombreux avantages, vous pouvez choisir parmi cinq abonnements annuels, valables du 1er septembre au 30 juin.

Pour plus d'information, rendez-vous ici ou contactez-nous directement : centredesarts@ecolint.ch !



Théâtre, danse, art visuels et musique...

Nos scènes et espaces accueillent une grande diversité d'événements tout au long de la saison, ouverts à tout public.

Découvrez les prochaines dates à ne pas manquer, et venez nous rendre visite au Centre des arts !

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF THE IB AT LA CHÂTAIGNERAIE

Graduation day is always a special occasion, but on this particular Friday in May 2023, it held an even greater significance. A total of 148 students proudly marched across the stage to receive their well-deserved diplomas. This ceremony marked the 50th anniversary of the first International Baccalaureate (IB) Diplomas awarded at La Châtaigneraie.

Back in 1974, the school was known as "Lycée des Nations" and had not yet become part of the Ecolint family. At that time, there were only 50 students enrolled, with only three in the Year 13 class, of whom two obtained the IB Diploma.

To commemorate this milestone, those pioneer students, Jamie Mackie and Andrea Danos, returned to celebrate alongside two legendary IB Coordinators, Tony Peiris and Fred Piderit. Ninon Duran, Alumni Community Manager, interviewed them.

Tony, Fred, can you tell us about the beginning of the IB at La Châtaigneraie and how you became part of this adventure?

Tony: I was recruited in 1971 for a 2-year contract to teach IB Mathematics and Physics, but ended up dedicating 30 years of my career to teaching and working at La Châtaigneraie. Milton Toubkin was the Director at the time, and he was the one who registered the school for this new diploma. The most challenging part was to convince the parents to let their children pursue the IB. Fortunately, the success of Andrea and Jamie, who were admitted to the universities of their choice after completing the IB, helped to alleviate concerns. By the time I retired, over 100 students were undertaking the IB at La Châtaigneraie.

Fred: I came to teach English at La Grande Boissière in 1982 but transferred to La Châtaigneraie due to its rapid expansion. The IB diploma programme was in its maturity, with its infrastructure in place. But I remember that the exams were held in the Motel de Founex: we were the "hobos" of the IB! By the time I became the IB Coordinator, we finally had access to the theatre and auditorium during the examination session.

By 1976, Lycée des Nations had been fully integrated into Ecolint. How did the transition go?

Tony: The transition was very smooth. It was a period of high growth for the campus, with many English-speaking families moving to Vaud and looking for schools for their children.

Fred: As two international schools, Lycée des Nations and Ecolint had a lot in common. Of course, there were cultural differences, which is normal, but it was all very amicable. The French section of La Châtaigneraie (ex *Collège Protestant Romand*) naturally became the place for *Maturité* students.

Tony: We had a French section and an English section, but the students participated in activities together, the teachers shared the same staff room, and some even taught in both sections!

What about the "friendly competition" between La Grande Boissière and La Châtaigneraie?

Fred: As IB Coordinators, we were of course checking the results of the other campus, but I would not say that there was rivalry. There was of course healthy competition between the sports teams.

How has the school changed over the years?

Tony: When I first joined, it was a small international boarding school with limited facilities, and we only had *La Ferme* and the Alps building. But over time, the Sports Centre was built in 1977, followed by the inauguration of the new Primary building in 1980. The new secondary building with classrooms, science laboratories, a library and a cafeteria, a generous gift from the Latsis family, was added in the 1990s.

Fred: For me, the marker of growth was the new library included in the "new building" gifted by Dr Latsis and his family. As an English teacher, I was delighted finally to have a library adequate to our needs.

Are you still in touch with former students and colleagues?

Tony: We have our own former La Châtaigneraie teachers' newsletter, and whenever we run into former students we share the information there. We often see former students joining lunches or formal events. We are expecting to see a few today!

Fred: Unfortunately, we also often see former students at the funerals of colleagues. They remain very loyal to their former teachers.

Andrea, Jamie, what convinced you to undertake the IB?

Andrea: I actually do not remember that much convincing was necessary: our teachers suggested that we enrol in this new program, and so I did!

Jamie: I remember discussing this with my parents and the teachers, as at the time I was in the French section at the *Collège Protestant* and I wanted to switch to an English-speaking system.

How was the IB back then? It is now very detailed and students are under a lot of pressure.

Jamie: Oh, really? Well, we were only half a dozen in the senior years, and only three of us were doing the IB. So we had classes only for us, and even on a one-on-one basis sometimes.

Andrea: We only had the final exam and a mock exam, but no continuous assessment or self-evaluation.

How was the graduation ceremony?

Andrea: We cannot remember if we had one!

Did you realise back then how revolutionary the IB was?

Andrea: We certainly hoped that it would



From left to right: Michael Winter (current IB Coordinator), Tony Peiris, Andrea Danos and Jamie Mackie.
Photo by Les Studios Casagrande.

expand, and we were aware of the potential of this diploma. We knew that there would be a demand for this type of diploma, as we were among expat families whose children often had to adapt to different local exams and diplomas as they moved around the world.

Jamie: We were still in the pilot phase when we did it, and there were only 12 schools selected to offer the IB, but from our own experience, we knew that it would be successful. National diplomas were not designed for the children of international families moving from country to country.

What did you do after the IB?

Andrea: I studied Psychology. I spent most of my career in education, and in later years I started teaching Psychology to social workers and training them in Geneva.

Jamie: I went back to Edinburgh to study town and country planning, followed up with a PhD at SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies) at the University of London, which started my career in international development. I worked for various NGOs and subsequently I moved to a think tank working on European Union development policy. We live in Belgium; I retired two years ago, but I still teach International Development at the *Collège d'Europe* (College of Europe).

Would you say that the IB was instrumental in your career?

Jamie: For me definitely: it was international, and I worked in the international sector during my career. Many of my current students did the IB, so I understand their background.

Andrea: I moved to the French system, which is very different from what I learned during the IB; for example, I was very surprised when they included the Theory of Knowledge course, years after I had followed it as part of my IB! But the open-mindedness that was infused in me during my education has been with me ever since.

For many alumni, leaving Ecolint can be a bit of a shock, as you realise that the world is not as international as our school. Did you have the same experience?

Andrea: I would not say that it was a shock, but I had to learn French quickly, as my family left Hungary when I was young and I grew up in Australia. But one skill that you acquire in international schools is to adapt quickly, and it has always been part of my life to adapt.

Jamie: I really stood out when I went back to Edinburgh, as it was not international at all; but I had Scottish roots, so this helped. It was a bit of a shocker – but, as Andrea said,

we adapt quickly. When I started studying at SOAS I really felt at home, because it's a very international institution.

Are you still in touch with each other?

Jamie: Yes, of course. I come to Geneva or Andrea goes to Brussels.

What is the best memory of your time at Lycée des Nations?

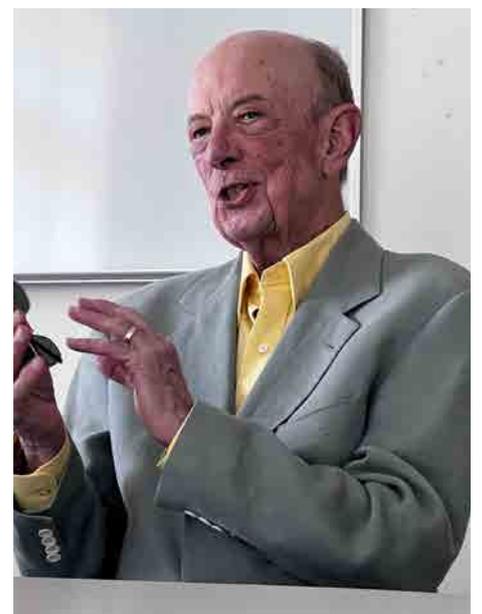
Andrea: The field trips! We went to the Alps. Or the ski trips that we would take every Wednesday during the winter. More generally, the enthusiasm of the teachers who had so many ideas.

Jamie: And this building, in the middle of the countryside. And the "revisions" by the swimming pool!

Any words of advice for current students?

Jamie: It's very difficult to put yourself back in their shoes 50 years later, but I would advise them to make the most of this time: not only with respect to the academic aspect, but also the social dimension.

Andrea: Do not forget that the open-mindedness of the school is unique. The multiculturalism it offers is enriching, so make the most of it!



Fred Piderit at La Châtaigneraie

CONRAD HUGHES: THE INAUGURAL INTERVIEW

By Alejandro Rodríguez-Giovo, Foundation Archivist

Our school's Foundation-wide Pedagogical Days can be exhilarating events, assembling many hundreds of Ecolint educators from all three campuses in a single venue. One is awed by the wealth and variety of personalities brought together on these occasions, representing an extraordinary range of backgrounds, intellect, skills and expertise – and it's frustrating that there can never be enough time to get to know properly so many colleagues who have so much to offer. During the coffee breaks between lectures and seminars, you wander around in bewilderment at the sheer number of teachers and other members of staff who are pursuing with passion, dedication and imagination the same mission as you, in the same institution. The profusion of interesting individuals milling around can make it difficult to single out a particular person with whom to talk.

It was at one such event, perhaps in 2006, that Nick Tate, the Director General at the time, caught my eye and beckoned me to join him and another colleague, a Campus des Nations teacher whom I had not previously come across. "Alex, I was hoping to introduce you to Conrad Hughes," he said – adding, with a faintly mischievous smile: "We were discussing Philippe Muray." I recognized the name of a contemporary, stimulatingly satirical French philosopher whom I'd heard about but hadn't actually read – though this did not prevent me from nodding knowledgeably, as I shook hands with Nick's interlocutor. The latter looked down at me ("looked down" in the strictly literal sense, because he was unusually tall and perpendicular, as well as suntanned – it was, I think, the end of August), fixed on me by his penetrating blue eyes and asked, rather disconcertingly: "Do you also subscribe to the 21st Century *Homo Festivus* paradigm, or do you lean more towards a nostalgic Aristotelian or Augustinian conception of humanity?"

Not knowing Conrad, it was difficult for me to read his expression, but notwithstanding the sobriety of his manner I glimpsed a twinkle in his eye and – as with Nick – the ghost of a puckish, ironical smile. I've long since lost count of the times that Conrad has confronted me, in a deadpan manner, with elaborately erudite, convoluted and provocative questions or statements, apparently designed to test one's wits and one's resistance to *pensée unique* platitudes and modish absurdities, but for the most part stemming from a sheer sense of fun. Conrad's impish and inventive humour, which reveals a restless, incisive mind and keen observational skills, is perhaps not the determining quality



that has propelled him to the helm of the world's oldest, largest and most famous international school as its first internally-appointed Director General since 1949 – his intellect, articulateness, deep-rooted and wide-ranging knowledge, multicultural educational vision and inexhaustible dynamism were doubtless more relevant – but it's a characteristic that will surely enliven his interaction with the vast Ecolint community for many years to come.

Interviewing Conrad for *Echo* this summer – his inaugural interview as full Director General – therefore felt to me like a landmark moment in Ecolint's rich history.

Alejandro Rodríguez-Giovo: What were your perceptions of Ecolint before you joined the school in 2005, and what were your earliest impressions of it, once you began to teach here?

Conrad Hughes: I had heard about Ecolint as a great institution, the world's first

international school and the inventor of the IB. Instinctively, like so many who initially hear of Ecolint, I wanted to join it.

Upon first arriving, one is struck by the scale and complexity of each campus, and of the school as a whole. Most international schools are substantially smaller than any one of Ecolint's campuses. During my first encounter with Nick Tate [the Director General at the time], I immediately perceived the intellectual and philosophical import of how he addressed educational matters.

I also found it curious to be addressed first by the Director General and then, shortly afterwards, by the President of the Staff Association. This wasn't a bad thing at all, because the message that came through to me, as a newly-arrived teacher, was that you'll be protected here: there is inspiring vision and strong leadership, but there are also people watching out for you.

AR-G: What individuals or events in Ecolint's almost 100-year history do you find most inspiring? Is there anyone in particular who is a role model for you?

CH: Several people. The first name that comes to mind is Marie-Thérèse Maurette [Ecolint's Director from 1929 to 1949], for the links that she forged and continued to strengthen with UNESCO. I think that it's very important to situate our discourse and our mission at the intergovernmental, international, broad-based level of education that UNESCO represents, because we need to understand what we're doing in the school in the context of the world and of the challenges that humanity, as a whole, faces. Maurette, in her work, expressed and prioritized this.

I have to add that it was a privilege and an honour for me to get to know George Walker [Ecolint's Director General from 1991 to 1999]. I first met him on a bus on the way to Campus des Nations, when I was a teacher there. I recognised him – he was the Director General of the IB at the time – and went up to him and introduced myself. In his very humble but inquisitive manner he asked me a few pointed questions, before we both descended from the bus at the same stop and he ambled off to his office in the building next to Nations. A few days later I found in my school pigeon-hole a copy of his book *To Educate the Nations*, inscribed to me with his wobbly handwriting over his signature. I thought that this was incredibly kind of him. In all my subsequent interactions with George I was impressed by his humanity and his integrity.

Nick Tate, to whom I've already referred, has been another source of inspiration for me. He respected all employees, and he raised our sights to the highest level. This is one thing that these role models have in common: the ability to inspire and to raise our sights.

AR-G: To what extent do you think it's healthy and desirable for the three campuses to maintain their subtle cultural and sociological differences? Would it be a priority for you to unify them or homogenise them more than they are already?

CH: Homogenise, no; unify, yes. One needn't be the same to be unified. Switzerland is a role model in this respect: there are 26 cantons that are very different, but they remain united. I've often drawn a parallel with Oxford or Cambridge: they are universities with a single identity, but their colleges are markedly different, and this is what gives them richness and charm. It's mindless and unnecessarily bureaucratic to over-standardise our campuses. We should make the best of the passion and the culture that make up the fabric of the three campuses.

At the same time, we have to ensure that when students graduate from the International School of Geneva, they can all speak of their experience with some sort of cogency. If the educational life in each campus is too different, Ecolint as a whole would risk becoming amorphous – an empty shell. It's important that we should be united regarding the mission, the philosophical message and the values of the school, in addition to all the work

that we're doing at the Foundation level. We need a unified approach towards these goals, even if we express and implement them slightly differently in each campus.

AR-G: Since its inception in 1924, Ecolint has welcomed and respected on an equal footing all expressions of faith (or absence of faith). Do you see our school as an institution that should cautiously keep religion at arm's length, or rather as an environment in which the diversity of religions is celebrated and students are invited to take a respectful, affectionate interest in each other's spiritual traditions and convictions?

CH: Our school has to provide a level playing field for students of all faiths; one that does not interfere with the beliefs and values that are cherished in each home. An example of the notion that these home-based convictions, traditions and values should not undermine the secular, egalitarian approach to education is France, where it has been beneficially accommodating, helping to foster the country's intellectual and cultural landscape, and to shape some outstanding French minds. For instance, Georges Haddad, twice president of the Sorbonne (who will be addressing our staff in October), is a product of *l'éducation nationale*. Other French thinkers, such as Alain Finkielkraut, have written at length about how this secular educational model was a lifeline for them, enabling them to integrate a mainstream cultural vision.

However, in 2023, this effort to neuter identity and to circumvent it is no longer working. I think this is because societies are changing, and the need for human beings to connect with their cultural origins is becoming increasingly recognised. A former colleague of mine, Giovanni Teti, told me once that when he was a schoolboy, he changed his name from "Giovanni" to "Jean" because he was embarrassed about being identified as an Italian immigrant, and worried that he'd be teased and called names. Today, as a European citizen, he's happy to be called Giovanni. It's important to understand that this new perception of the human condition generates a thirst to celebrate one's identity. Trying to hide it doesn't work, not in today's world. What we need to do in Ecolint – and this is not for me to decree from my executive position; rather it emerges naturally from our Charter, from our strategy, from our mission – is to respect and appreciate cultural or religious

differences. Of course, we must seek that which unites us, but without censoring one another – provided that what is being expressed is not hateful.

AR-G: The educational world is currently convulsed by the text-generating capabilities of computer-generated "artificial intelligence" (which, in my opinion, it would be more accurate to label as "simulated intelligence"). What response would you advocate from Ecolint to ensure that our students are still writing their own thoughtful and personally researched essays, in contrast to the IB's apparently defeatist acceptance of the demise of the essay as an educational tool?

CH: By the time that this ChatGPT noise reached a crescendo, colleagues had already been exploring in workshops across the Foundation the challenges posed by these technological developments. We're good at this at Ecolint, as seen by the agility with which we responded to the Covid crisis with appropriate educational innovation.

Artificial intelligence is where our thinking, as humans, should start, not where it should end.

There is, of course, no question of allowing students to employ ChatGPT or other AI shortcuts simply to produce their work. However, an intelligent, educationally responsible application of AI tools could be to elicit their automated responses in order to examine them critically, from a reflective human perspective, so as to stimulate one's own thinking. If you consider Bloom's Taxonomy (a classification of the different outcomes and skills that educators set for their students), we want to reinforce higher-order thinking skills, such as synthesis, judgement, analysis and creativity. I think that technology can help us do that. The goal is therefore to use technology creatively, but never mindlessly. For example (and to quote from our own policy): by using ChatGPT to find errors in computer coding or spreadsheet formulas; to generate examination responses and then ask students to assess the response against those rubrics; to find real-world examples of abstract concepts/theories that can later be incorporated into examination responses; to generate extended pieces of writing which can then be critiqued by individuals or groups of students. Teachers should discuss generative artificial intelligence with students to

CONRAD HUGHES: THE INAUGURAL INTERVIEW

foster some critical appreciation of the manner in which information is gathered and distributed by it, so as to understand the nature of algorithmic meaning-making, including the mistakes that it can make.

A second goal is the ethical use of technology. It is essential to address the issue of intellectual honesty and intellectual property in the light of these technological advances. It's our job as educators to ensure that our students understand these issues and can navigate these new technologies ethically.

Regarding the risks of academically dishonest use of on-line search engines and ChatGPT (which is simply an augmentation of the former), in my own classroom practice I've always made sure that at least one of my students' major assignments is written in class, because I want to prepare them for entirely autonomous reasoning and intellectual decisions; I need to train them for examinations, and I want to make sure that they can generate their own thoughts without reliance on external aids. I think that it's better to do it this way than to try to control and monitor closely and continually their day-to-day use of AI technology. When they are at home, they have full, unrestricted access to the latter, so we must prepare them for dealing with it responsibly.

What I've noticed is that allowing students to have recourse to new technologies in a responsible, academically transparent and honest manner is generating increasingly strong results. They have to learn to live with, rather than without, these technologies. If you don't do this, if you don't prepare them in this way, you create a situation where they will probably become addicted as soon as they leave school and are overexposed to the allure of AI.

AR-G: You have masterminded the "Learner Passport" initiative, which could have far-reaching consequences in the world of international education. How do you envisage Ecolint's role in launching and sustaining this world-wide project, in collaboration with the universities that would need to accept the passport (in the same way that they accepted another Ecolintian initiative, the IB, in the late 1960s)?

CH: The Learner Passport is an important and powerful statement of our desire to appreciate the whole human being

in the process of assessment. Purely knowledge-based assessments are important and have their place, but you're missing far too much talent by carrying on with this model, which dates back to the early 20th Century, or even mid-19th Century, in terms of assessment design. Creativity, interpersonal competence, attitudes, decision-making, all these foundational and life-worthy skills and types of knowledge should not only be inculcated during the educational process, but they should also be recognised in formal assessments. The sports, arts and community service in which students engage, for example, should feature in the end of year transcript.

We've set up a coalition of schools to honour all learning, with over 50 participating schools, colleges and universities, as well as the Council of International Schools and the International Baccalaureate. This coalition is an opportunity to redefine the construct of what constitutes a transcript. It will take time; to begin with, our vision is that in the next five years all students in Ecolint from Year 10 upwards will use the passport to describe the competences that they are developing as they learn. It will be our job to influence universities as we send our graduates out into the world with these passports.

We have already seen some interest in the passport from US and Spanish universities, and there is a team of people working to foster this, including our Guidance Counsellors. Let's not forget that the IB started small and stayed small for a long time. Many schools are reluctant to engage with this kind of project in its early stages. At the outset, we ourselves were rather timid in promoting the IB, our own brainchild; it was pursued alongside other, national programmes, without being particularly prioritised. But I'm committed to us building up momentum for the Learner Passport.

AR-G: Your on-line lecture titled "Are Skills More Important than Knowledge?", which was first posted in 2017, has attracted many thousands of viewers and made quite a splash. In it, you vigorously and wittily demolish the "skills in a vacuum" educational quackery, whereby students will spontaneously discover everything they need to know on their smartphones, and you defend the importance for schools of transmitting concrete knowledge, before critical

skills can be successfully fostered and implemented. Seeing that in recent years Ecolint's institutional discourse at Foundation level has drifted away from this eminently sound approach (which has nevertheless characterized the school for most of its history), how do you intend to restore the centrality of knowledge in Ecolint's curricula?

CH: That's an interesting question. Of course, there is the curriculum approach, which is technical. It's about the transmission of knowledge. But there is also the institutional, cultural approach, which is where I'd like to start. By investing the school with a level of interaction and discussion about education that is of a high quality, by conferring on the Student Council a rigorous mandate to drive, together with the school's leadership, philosophical discussions on ethical, political and intellectual matters, by inviting high-powered intellectuals to address our faculty, and by insisting on superior levels of intellectual intercourse among our teachers and students, we will continue to foster an institutional culture in which knowledge is appreciated.

You'll perceive this in the types of discussions that we'll have in Foundation-wide Pedagogical Days and addresses, in the types of communications that we'll be putting out, in the Centenary conferences on education that will take place – focusing on such issues as sustainable development and inclusion, which will give us the opportunity to showcase some of our brilliant student minds and to highlight some of the most impressive speeches, projects and other pieces of work by students. So our overall cultural approach is a key factor.

Schools and universities can be regarded as the last bastion of intellectual freedom that can guarantee the exchange of well-informed ideas, supported by deep-rooted knowledge, free from the distortion and manipulation of utilitarian, corporate, economic, political or ideological aims and ambitions.

AR-G: What goals would you like to prioritize for the commemoration and celebration of Ecolint's Centenary, throughout the 2024-25 academic year?

CH: Ecolint people and Ecolint stories: this is what I'm most interested in, as our school is about the people, fundamentally. It's too early to talk about the Centenary in



any great detail, but it will involve theatrical productions; high-level conferences with UNESCO on peace, inclusion and sustainable development; publications; gatherings and several educational projects focussed on the extraordinary legacy of Ecolint and what we wish to develop, together, over the next period of our development as the world's first international school: the 2024-2030 strategic plan.

AR-G: Given your nationality, family background, cultural outlook, education and previous professional and life experience, are there any particular, personal characteristics that you think will inform or enrich your role as Ecolint's new Director General?

CH: My childhood experiences at school in South Africa left me with a deep-seated sensitivity regarding human dignity, and with the uncompromising conviction that it needs to be protected and upheld. I remember seeing adults, often considerably older than their wealthy, privileged bosses and supervisors, treated with such a lack of respect that it sparked in the depths of my still childlike, nascent moral understanding a sense of injustice, and the certainty that this was unacceptable and morally wrong. I didn't need to know that this was a manifestation of a racist system called "Apartheid", or that it was condemned by the international media, or that the country's political system was scaffolded around it – I would find out about all this later – but just seeing the dignity of an elderly person being trampled on by an arrogant, self-important, young individual shocked me.

This experience has contributed to my determination that no one's human dignity should ever be damaged in our school, inasmuch as my authority and influence can prevent this. We are a vast institution, with some 1,200 employees, over 4,500 students and many more alumni. I must do everything I can, in the light of the principle enshrined in our Charter, regarding the equal value of all human beings, to protect everyone's dignity. Whenever I see anyone raising his or her voice to another person, humiliating another person, or trampling on someone else's self-respect, this rekindles in me the deep-set indignation that I first experienced when witnessing such behaviour in South Africa. I think that as human beings, and more particularly as members of the International School of Geneva community, we all understand

how wrong such behaviour is. It's one of the key convictions that shape Ecolint's identity.

AR-G: Not many people have the stamina, diligence and intellectual calibre to earn two PhDs from prestigious universities. You have doctoral qualifications not only in Education, but also in English Literature. Turning to the latter field of study, would you be willing to name two or three authors who are particularly precious to you, and have influenced you aesthetically, emotionally and/or philosophically?

CH: Well, I'd have to begin by mentioning Fyodor Dostoyevsky, whom I see as the greatest novelist of all time, in particular for *The Brothers Karamazov* – a book that engages in metaphysical and moral reflection and decision-making on an epic scale, exploring who and what we ultimately are. I'd recommend it to anyone. Dostoyevsky to me was the supreme writer. Then there is Flaubert: *Madame Bovary* is so beautifully written that I struggle to think of another work of literature that rivals it artistically. Obviously, I could also talk about Shakespeare, Cervantes, Dante... It's self-evident why these extraordinary geniuses are studied – and should continue to be. My own doctoral dissertation in English focused on J. M. Coetzee, probably the greatest novelist that South Africa has produced.

I believe, strongly, that the study of literature is a gateway into understanding culture, and it is for this reason, among others, that I encourage our teachers to teach the great works of the world, and not just those of Western Europe. Some extraordinary voices that have moved me include Wole Soyinka, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Yasunari Kawabata, Gabriel García Márquez and Arundhati Roy.

AR-G: In this connection, how do you rate the importance of sustained reading (which is widely perceived to be in decline) as part of the educational process?

CH: Reading expands and consolidates your vocabulary and syntactical range, helps you to think clearly and coherently, extends your imagination, improves your mind, and it puts you into contact with other minds – especially with great minds. It's absolutely essential and I'd like to salute our teachers for fighting the good fight by nurturing sound reading habits and making

our students understand and value the paramount importance of reading.

AR-G: Remarkably, you have managed to maintain your original role as a classroom teacher of Theory of Knowledge and of Philosophy throughout your successive tenures as Director of Education and Director of La Grande Boissière campus and Secondary School. Is it conceivable that you could continue to teach even as Director General?

CH: I shall continue to teach as Director General: Theory of Knowledge more precisely. I ask that every educational leader teach, as we are first and foremost educators, and teaching is immeasurably good for our understanding of the student experience.

AR-G: One final question: We have already touched upon the person you most admire in Ecolint's history. More challengingly for someone with your broad range of interests and erudition, is there one individual in the history of mankind whom you would single out as particularly significant and inspiring for you – someone you particularly revere and think of frequently?

CH: In 1993 in Johannesburg, I met Muhammad Ali. He had come for the opening of *Magic at Four AM*, a musical by the great South African playwright Mbongeni Ngema. I shook his hand. It felt like a lion's paw, and I was struck by his height, powerful broad shoulders and unmistakable aura. He was one of those people, like Nelson Mandela, who had an immensely intense aura about him, almost tangible in the ectoplasm, like an extension of the soul in the air itself. From that moment on, something shifted in me and I became a kind of Muhammad Ali acolyte.

To me he was the greatest of all times. He reinvented his art; he stood by his convictions (losing his world champion's belt for refusing to fight in the Vietnam War, and throwing his Olympic gold medal into the Ohio River to protest against segregation); his mythic fights took place after his 32nd birthday, when many were writing him off; he was humorous, creative and a brilliant orator. Above all, he picked himself up after his Parkinson's diagnosis and carried on working for peace. I look up to him as a model of creativity, perseverance and humanity.

INTERVIEW WITH THE “NEW” SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL OF LA GRANDE BOISSIÈRE

By Ninon Duran, Alumni Community Manager

Jonathan Halden started his career at Ecolint in La Châtaigneraie before transferring to La Grande Boissière, holding multiple positions, and was most recently Assistant Principal and IB Diploma Coordinator. Jon is succeeding Conrad Hughes, who is now Director General.

You joined Ecolint in 2006. Can you tell us what attracted you to the school?

I arrived in Switzerland in 2001 and taught at Le Rosey and Collège du Léman. I became aware of Ecolint through the sports leagues. What attracted me to the school was that the students at Ecolint seemed more “normal” compared to the students whom I had taught previously. Additionally, I was aware of the fascinating history of the school. The values of Ecolint seemed more aligned with my own ethos, and I was proven right. I was almost ready to leave the field of education when I saw an opening for a part-time position at Ecolint. The part-time nature of the job allowed me to pursue a Master’s in Education while teaching. Teaching at Ecolint rejuvenated my interest and passion for education, so I’m grateful for the opportunity that the school gave me.

You first started teaching at La Châtaigneraie. What would you say are the differences between La Grande Boissière and La Châtaigneraie?

Firstly, I must emphasize that neither campus is better than the other. I have come to appreciate both campuses. In my opinion, La Grande Boissière has a slightly more diverse student body, and the campus has a more pronounced francophone atmosphere. There are more opportunities to speak French at LGB, and I see that as a positive aspect. When I was a university counsellor at La Châtaigneraie, the campus had more of a British feel, but I believe that the proportion of UK students has decreased somewhat. It was difficult to leave La Châtaigneraie after nine years, and it still feels like going home when I revisit it.

In some yearbooks, students mention several times your love for deadlines or your “life-goal of meeting deadlines”.

(Laughing) When I joined LGB as an IB Coordinator, there was a very relaxed culture regarding deadlines. I remember writing to students before the beginning of the school year, suggesting that they should have finalized the draft of their Extended Essay



by the end of September. I was met with dismay because someone actually wanted to enforce internal deadlines. However, things improved until Covid hit in 2019, so it’s still a battle!

Will you still teach as a Principal?

Yes, Dr Hughes was still teaching, and I plan to keep my class on Politics and Government with the Y11 students. It is essential for me to stay in touch with what is happening in the classroom and to understand what my colleagues are experiencing, in order to remain empathetic. I consider myself as much a Head Teacher as a Principal.

What are your priorities as a Principal?

My priority will be to ensure that each student has a consistently good learning experience in the Secondary School. This includes reinforcing the Universal Learner Passport, assisting my colleagues in assessing the required competencies, helping the Science Department implement the new science guide, and ensuring the effectiveness of the Mentor programme. A significant part of this involves actively listening to colleagues, students and parents. Well-being will continue to be a school goal, which we address primarily through the Mentor program.

This is always a difficult question, but what would be your best memory so far?

As an IB Coordinator, you spend two years

with a class, and it’s a real rollercoaster. You watch them grow, support them through university applications and exams, and speak to them at graduation. This creates a deep bond. (Showing a mug) This mug is from a special class, LGB 2018. They gave it to me with quotes of things I had been telling them for two years, and I drink from this mug every day!

Ecolint will celebrate its Centenary next year. Have you any thoughts on the past and the future of the school?

I am incredibly proud to be part of a school with such a rich heritage. When I participate in admission tours for prospective parents, my favourite part is the history of Ecolint. This is a special place, more than just a school. I believe that we can foster an even stronger sense of community, and the new facilities like the *Centre sportif* will contribute to that goal.

How would you define the Ecolint spirit?

Well, of course, we are a place of peace and tolerance where we celebrate what brings us together. But at LGB, it’s also about freedom and trust, which are at the heart of everything we do. We trust students to be the agents of their lives, to choose their subjects, and to come and go from the campus (starting at a certain age). We also trust teachers to lead their classes as they see fit within reasonable bounds, and the Universal Learner Passport embodies this approach perfectly. I find this liberating and dynamic. When things go wrong, we try to have a restorative approach rather than a punitive one. I believe that all of this is part of the Ecolint spirit.

Can you tell us something that people don’t already know about you?

I no longer have much time for this, but I used to do pantomime with an expat theatre group. Also, most people know about my passion for environmental protection. I haven’t taken a plane since 2018, and I sold my car in 2017.

RENCONTRES AVEC DES ALUMNI ENGAGÉS

Au cœur d'un écosystème fragilisé, de nombreux alumni font chaque jour le choix de s'investir personnellement et professionnellement pour la protection de notre planète. Le développement durable est leur credo, et dans ce numéro d'*Echo Magazine* nous sommes allés à la rencontre de deux d'entre eux. À des niveaux différents, ils œuvrent tous deux pour un avenir juste et joyeux, animés par un désir commun de préserver notre environnement pour les générations futures.

Comment rendre la sensibilisation à l'environnement amusante pour les jeunes ? Cecilia Zoe Dell'Osso (LGB, 2023) a entrepris d'apporter une solution à cette question.

En 2018, lorsque Greta Thunberg a appelé sa génération à s'engager pour la défense de l'environnement, Cecilia a participé à plusieurs manifestations et a fait entendre sa voix pour préserver son avenir. Cependant, une fois les manifestants dispersés, elle a constaté que des déchets et du plastique étaient abandonnés dans les rues, chacun retournant à sa routine quotidienne. Cette dichotomie a semblé anormale à Cecilia qui, en tant que citoyenne du monde courageuse, a décidé de passer à l'action.

Ce qui a commencé comme un projet personnel en huitième année est devenu une application sociale appelée *GreenUp*, axée sur des défis liés à la protection de l'environnement. Les membres accumulent des points en relevant ces défis et l'application met en avant le troc comme alternative à l'achat de produits neufs. Profitant du confinement lié à la pandémie de Covid-19, Cecilia s'est consacrée pleinement au développement de ce projet et a fondé l'association *Happy Green World Geneva*, rassemblant près de 50 membres, parmi lesquels des camarades de classe et des amis. Son objectif est de protéger l'environnement et de sensibiliser les jeunes à la durabilité, en adoptant une approche ludique.

Grâce au soutien total de sa famille et de l'Ecolint, Cecilia a consacré autant de temps au développement de *GreenUp*, pendant son année de douzième, qu'à ses

cours. À l'âge de 16 ans, elle a lancé une campagne de financement participatif pour soutenir le développement de l'application, avec le soutien de l'EPFL. Les objectifs ont été atteints, permettant ainsi à Cecilia de rémunérer des développeurs professionnels chargés de résoudre les problèmes techniques. Les prochaines étapes du projet consistent à lancer l'application dans différentes écoles du canton et à la promouvoir sur divers médias.

Pour l'instant, Cecilia s'apprête à intégrer une université en Suède, choisie pour son engagement en faveur de la protection de l'environnement et son accent sur l'entrepreneuriat. Cependant, elle reste fermement aux commandes de *GreenUp*, son objectif ultime étant d'avoir un impact sur les communautés et de contribuer concrètement à la protection de notre environnement fragile.



Télécharger GreenUp :

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RENCONTRES AVEC DES ALUMNI ENGAGÉS

The Inspiring Journey of an Alumnus: Embracing Solar Energy and Sustainability

Arun Amirtham, much like other children from international families, had a brief but impactful experience at La Châtaigneraie, graduating in 1981. Even today, he cherishes the wise words of advice from Mr. Mike Lee, who emphasized the importance of refining the introduction of an essay as a springboard for success. Now, with the springboard set, let us delve into the remarkable personal and professional path that led Arun to become the Chairman and Chief Mentor at 5 Elements Sustainable Development Group.

Following his studies in electronics engineering, Arun embarked on a 24-year journey with Philips in Switzerland. Working in hardware, software, and complex microelectronics, he witnessed the advent of the mobile revolution firsthand. However, a sense of restlessness began to grow within him, urging him to reflect on his life goals and what lay ahead.

In 2009, as President of the Indian Association in Switzerland, Arun organized a lecture on solar energy by renowned Indian scientist *Padma Vibhushan* [a prestigious title conferred by the Republic of India] Dr V.S.R. Arunachalam, who was visiting the country for the Conference of the Parties (COP). The event was targeted at young Indians in Switzerland. Arun almost did not attend it but – as serendipity would have it – in the end he did, and this changed the course of his life. He found himself captivated by Dr. V.S.R. Arunachalam's revelation that solar energy had reached a significant milestone. At that moment, it became clear to Arun that his next endeavour would be to venture into solar energy entrepreneurship.

True to his scientific mindset, Arun began by immersing himself in education, and attended conferences to familiarize himself with the intricacies of solar energy: from the micro levels of electronics to the macro levels of solar power. As he pursued this solar Ariadne's thread, Arun realized the importance of recognizing his own limitations as an entrepreneur. He understood the need to surround himself with experts to collaborate with. Recognizing his expertise in technology development, but lacking the necessary financial resources, he naturally gravitated towards rural electrification. To his surprise, he discovered that the greatest need for his expertise lay in



Arun Amirtham showing the zeroPoverty's solar home system to villagers

his native India, as well as Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Through managing rural electrification projects, Arun's eyes were opened to the harsh realities faced by communities lacking energy access. He witnessed the profound impact of energy deprivation, such as children studying without proper lighting and women cooking with toxic kerosene lamps. Embracing every opportunity that came his way, Arun encountered remarkable individuals in this field, including Dipal Chandra Barua, co-founder of the Grameen Bank and Founding Managing Director of Grameen Shakti. These encounters further fuelled his passion for sustainable development, aligning perfectly with the Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations.

Always driven by a thirst for knowledge and new challenges, Arun began exploring social business models. Fearlessly adapting, he transformed his business approach into a hybrid model, with one branch dedicated to commercial projects and the other focused on creating social impact. Restlessness continues to drive him, leading Arun to address the water crisis through multiple projects in Bangladesh, while mentoring young people and organising a peace tour in India, bringing a story of reconciliation from South Africa in order to draw

parallels with the caste system of his native country.

Just as photons in the Sun undergo a "random walk" before reaching its surface, Arun's personal journey towards sustainability has been unpredictable. Listening to his vibrant enthusiasm for ideas and projects, it is evident that we can anticipate more exciting initiatives from him. However, unlike a photon, Arun's endeavours will not take 30,000 years to reach the surface.

ECOLINT'S GLOBAL CITIZEN EDUCATION COURSE

The United Nations' Transforming Education Summit of 2022, which took place in New York one year ago, was a milestone in the development of a vision for educational relevance across the globe. In that summit, António Guterres challenged educational systems throughout the world to rethink curriculum so as to address the burning issues of climate change, social justice and how to create a more inclusive society in which every person and group might thrive.



In a year's time, Ecolint will be celebrating its Centenary. What role will we play as the world's first international school in ensuring that our students are learning to thrive in today's socially intertwined yet polarised, globalised society, and are equipped to make a positive impact on the world around them? What will our response have been to the Transforming Education Summit's exhortation?

With UNESCO's International Bureau of Education (who are historical partners of Ecolint) and the United Nations Office for Human Rights, we will spend this academic year designing a course in Global Citizenship Education. The course will build on a project that UNESCO developed and trialled last year with schools around the world (including some of our teachers and students), but it will also involve the participation and input of Ecolint department heads, staff and students, to make sure that the course is designed collaboratively and represents all the voices of the community. We will also reach out to our wide community of supporters to ask for help to underwrite the costs of this initiative in order to allow us to develop it as extensively as possible.

The course will run through different stages of the student experience (Primary, Middle and Secondary) and will be introduced to students in modules that will sit in existing academic subjects. We are not seeking to displace core areas of knowledge or create a stand-alone course: global citizenship should be integrated into mainstream knowledge and skill development to allow students to understand its context and potential application within the overall scope and sequencing of their learning. Indeed, it is through epistemic domains and not in isolation that questions of citizenship, moral responsibility and criticality should be nurtured.

The focus of the course will be on three areas:

Education for Peace (the history and culture of political systems of Switzerland; the rules of international diplomacy; human rights; peace and conflict studies; conflict resolution; the practice of philosophy with children)

Education for Inclusion (understanding prejudice; cognitive bias; structural

inequalities; the key concepts needed for a deep understanding of the dynamics of discrimination and the value of diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism; tropes in social psychology such as in-grouping, relative deprivation, segregation, otherness and implicit bias).

Education for Sustainable Development (the study of regenerative systems; alternative models to economic growth; ancestral knowledge systems related to the preservation of ecosystems; environmental custodianship; alternative energies).

Once the course has been designed, towards the end of 2023-2024, we will run teacher training across the organisation so that in our centenary year we are ready to roll out the course for Ecolint students, adapted to the different age groups that will encounter it in the classroom. However, the writing of this course is not only for our own students: it is our wish that through our partnership with UNESCO, other students in the world might access it via ministries of education and education boards: it will be a contribution to the public good by Ecolint and its partners.

The Global Citizenship Education Course will be built within the community and with the support of experts. It will empower our students to face the needs of our planet with competences that we will develop and assess intentionally and explicitly in the curriculum. By doing this, we will be responding to the Transforming Education Summit and creating an educational experience that elevates students to take on global challenges with confidence, creativity and sensitivity.

Conrad Hughes
Director General

Ecolint Centenary



Save the date for the
**Alumni World
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YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW: PREGNY – 1969-2023

This school year marks the end of an era for Ecolint and for Campus des Nations. It is with mixed feelings that students, staff and parents said goodbye to Pregny Early Years Centre for the last time in June, and will get ready to inaugurate the new purpose-built Early Years building in August, bringing the whole campus together at Saconnex.



UN Secretary General U Thant visiting the United Nations School (future Ecolint Early Years Centre) in April 1971, in the company of the school's director at the time, Joyce Wakenshaw

The roots of Pregny

The history of Pregny as an Ecolint campus goes back to 1975 when the Pregny-Rigot schools joined the Foundation. The building was designed by the Swiss architect Jean-Marc Lamunière, and the project was carried out between 1969 and 1974 for the United Nations School, as it was known before its merger with Ecolint. Back then, Pregny housed only the Primary School, from Year 1 to Year 6, and the Early Years classes were located at Rigot, a handsome old farmhouse near Place des Nations. When the new Saconnex building was inaugurated in 2005, Pregny became the new Campus

des Nations Early Years Centre, and Rigot left the Foundation.

Inès and Anne Lamunière, Jean-Marc Lamunière's daughters, both have fond memories of Pregny. Inès was a child when her father worked on the project and she recalls how honoured he was to be selected for it. "It was in the 1960s that discussions about school buildings began, as there was a need to find new structures to support pedagogy," recalls Inès. This is where the idea of a central space surrounded by classrooms came from. Lamunière created a "cluster", as he liked to call it, around which the

classrooms converge. From this were born two atmospheres: one where the classrooms open directly onto the outdoors, and another with the cluster bringing natural light from above. This layout was also critical to creating a sense of community and enabling an easy transition between the indoor and the outdoor spaces. In the words of Ecolint historian Michael Knight, "The Pregny building as a whole was a striking example of imaginative school architecture. It was to be further enhanced by another extension containing specialist facilities in 1987." (*Ecolint – A Portrait of the International School of Geneva*, Geneva: 1999, page 74)

Anne was a student at Pregny from Year 2 to Year 6. For her, Pregny was the happiest time in her entire schooling. "It was truly a wonderful setting for us to grow up in. There was incredible energy among the teachers and the students, and the innovative way the school was built enabled us to spend a lot of time with younger and older kids."

A word from our teachers

Isla Gordon, Early Years Principal, joined Pregny as a teacher in 1999, taking on the leadership of the school in 2017. What she loved the most when she first started was the collaboration between teachers and leadership, who were all very receptive to pedagogical innovations. These were the early years of the IB Primary Years Programme, and Pregny provided an ideal yet real place in which to try out new ideas. Everyone was enthusiastic about this framework, which gave a lot of scope for ideas and concepts that were going to have a positive impact on teaching and learning.

Katherine (Katie) Concannon, Janet Mills and Linda Kwon are also among the teachers who started at Pregny (and Rigot) in the early 2000s. When they first heard the news about the new



Early Years building at Campus des Nations

building, their first reaction was regret and nostalgia at having to leave the forest and the natural environment of Pregny. However, these feelings were soon replaced by the excitement of being able to create new learning spaces and the opportunity to draw on pooled knowledge and experience to look at best practices and how they've developed over the years. They also all agree that there are many advantages to bringing the campus together.

When asked what were their fondest memories of Pregny, Katie said:

"What is special with Primary students is that we, as teachers, can really foster and inspire curiosity and give everything a try. But this is true also among adults. Do you want to try something new? Go for it! Let's see what happens. We model that for the students, and we model that for each other. I think this is threaded through many wonderful experiences, like having a sleepover at school for

Years 5 & 6 on the occasion of the Readathon, but also when members from the whole Pregny community came together on a Saturday to create an outdoor classroom out of logs, mud kitchens and other outdoor spaces."

For Janet, what first came to mind were the times when they held those amazing American Thanksgiving dinners. Regardless of nationality, they all got together to celebrate.

Over the years, the teaching at Pregny has evolved, and teachers are now preparing students for the big move. "Our students are learning the best way that they can because we have a more systematic approach. We have documented what we have done over the years and can go back, refer to our records and discuss them. Pregny is also where parents learn how to be parents of students as much as children start to learn who they are, and how to be independent of their parents," explain Pregny's teachers.

Teachers said that they took advantage of the construction of the Early Years Extension to include it in the children's units of inquiry. The students have units centred on the design process of the building, and they visited the construction site. The whole process has been connected to their learning, rather than to the end of an era and the start of something new.

Some student memories

What about the students? Lulwa Naman and Maithili Nalawade are now Year 13 students who graduated in June. They both started their school journey at Pregny in 2008. Both feel nostalgic when recalling their time there. Lulwa's favourite experiences were the activities in the playground. Boys and girls were constantly playing together, and no one was left out. Maithili remembers the excitement of the first time they played with the snow. The focus on play-based learning was a huge part of it.

When asked what aspects of what they learned at Pregny have continued to



Students visiting the construction site

influence them during their school journey at Ecolint, Lulwa said:

"Diversity and inclusion were promoted at Pregny from a very young age. I remember in Year 2 when our teacher would play us the 'Caring' song: 'Treat others how you want to be treated. We care about our friends no matter who they are'. These are lessons that have stuck with me all the way through to Year 13 at Campus des Nations, where anti-discrimination is at the heart of my extra-curricular work."

For Maithili it was:

"My values and morals, which were built up by the teachers and the community at Pregny. In some way, a lot of me is based on everything that I learnt during my early years there. I remember that our teacher, Ms. Kennedy, would teach us about responsibility, friendship, and other values, such as keeping the Earth clean, through songs".

Both are confident that there will be advantages to having Early Years students at Saconnex. First of all, the transition between the Early Years and the Primary School will become easier, as the students may be less intimidated by an environment that is already familiar to them.

The new Early Years Centre

The construction of the new Early Years Centre was finalised in the spring, and our young learners moved into the purpose-built Early Years facility in late August, at the start of the new school year.

Their new school features a sustainably-built environment with larger classrooms, flexible learning areas, extra space for our learning support and ESP students... and even a slide!

Federica Iannarelli

*Marketing & Communications
Campus Partner for La Grande Boissière
and Campus des Nations*

TALES FROM THE GRAVES

Foundation Archivist and alumnus Alejandro Rodríguez-Giovo explains how a peccadillo he perpetrated in his youth led him to discover a towering Ecolint parent and his talented daughter.

I once stole a book from an English classroom in La Grande Boissière. Before you recoil from the sordid confessions of a criminal mind, let me specify that I was a 13-year-old minor at the time, and that my conscience eventually pricked me into returning the volume to the shelf where it belonged after I'd read it. This required a considerable effort of will, as I was rapidly mesmerized by the novel, the subject of which was enticing for someone whose passion for ancient Rome had been whetted by his Latin teacher, the learned and legendary Mr. (Michael) Quin. The dust-jacket featured a modernized portrait of a Roman in a toga, his soulful expression striking in its immediacy, and an intriguing title, *I, Claudius* – which (thinking of Roman numerals) I initially misinterpreted as “*One, Claudius*”. What could that possibly mean? The famous first-person-singular opening sentence of the novel (Emperor Claudius' fictitious but meticulously researched and eminently plausible autobiography) soon put me on the right track.

Nevertheless, I rather conceitedly saw myself as a pioneer who was discovering, through his audacious, subversive enterprise, a recent literary work (this happened to be a new edition of *I, Claudius*, hot off the press and still redolent with the exciting aroma of a freshly-printed book) sequestered for older readers – as if the English teacher whose classroom it was wouldn't have been delighted to lend me the book, had I asked to borrow it. Little did I know that I'd stumbled across one of the most acclaimed novels of the 20th Century, first published in 1934. Indeed, there was a lot that I didn't know, particularly about its author, Robert Graves.

So extensive and varied was the literary and scholarly achievement of Graves (1895-1985) that it's difficult to encapsulate readily. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines him as an “English poet, novelist, critic, and classical scholar”, and highlights the fact that he wrote more than 120 books, among the most famous of which (in addition to *I, Claudius*) was the autobiographical classic of World War I, *Goodbye to All That* (1929; revised edition 1957). One might add that he was also



Robert Graves at the time he fought in World War I (Courtesy of The New Statesman)

the author of a monumental, two-volume work of scholarship and narration, *The Greek Myths* (1955), and that in 1953 he penned the moving “Coronation Address” poem dedicated to Queen Elizabeth II (which did not prevent him from turning down – on the grounds that it would have been inconsistent with a poet's integrity – the Commander of the British Empire honour that she later intended to grant him). In 1960, the great literary critic George Steiner (who, as a guest of Ecolint, once lectured to our students), paid him homage with the essay “The Genius of Robert Graves”.

Most relevant to this article, however, is the fact that in 1957 Graves, and his wife Beryl, who had been living in the island of Majorca since 1946, selected Ecolint as the ideal boarding school for their children,

Lucía and Juan. “We are most anxious to send the children to you”, wrote Graves on the 26th March (several of his letters, handwritten on unlined, diaphanously thin paper, with the script slanted upwards from left to right, have been preserved in Ecolint's Archives). “I don't know whether it will help you to find a vacancy, that I have been employed by UNESCO on translating one of their *100 Representative Books*.” (It's interesting to note Graves' correct assumption that Ecolint had close links with this organization, bearing in mind that Conrad Hughes, our new Director General, is seeking to broaden and deepen our collaboration with it).

In May of that year Mr. and Mrs. Graves accompanied their children to Geneva for interviews, following which, on the 3rd June, Graves wrote again to the

school, to express his pleasure that they had been accepted: "It has taken a great weight off our minds; for one has only to see your boys and girls to know that the atmosphere is a happy one, and conducive to work." Earnest though he was about securing a place for his children in Ecolint, on their "Application for Admission" forms he mischievously defined his own professional "Position or title" as "Sometime Professor of Eng. Lit., Royal Egyptian University" – an institution that is portrayed hilariously in *Goodbye to All That*, and from which he had resigned after only two terms in 1926.



Portrait of Robert Graves in 1957 (when he enrolled his children in Ecolint), by Mati Klarwein

Graves' epistolary rapport with Ecolint fostered such trust in our school on his part that, shortly before his visit to Geneva in May 1957, he wrote to Mr. A. Forbes, the school's co-director (alongside Fred Roquette), informing him apologetically ("I hope you will forgive me") that he had instructed his New York publishers to forward to our Route de Chêne 62 address "an important batch of proofs". He explained that "not knowing where I shall be, I asked them to send it c/o you, to collect when I arrive."

Once the Graves siblings had settled in the Boarding House in September of that year, above-mentioned Mr. Quin took on the challenge of instructing Lucía – whose father was, it's piquant to note, one of the world's most eminent classical scholars (a translator into English of the works of Homer, Apuleius and Suetonius) – in Latin, and liaised with Graves regarding the support that the latter would provide her during the summer holidays. A decade or so later, if I had thought of mentioning to Mr. Quin my enthusiasm for Graves' fiction, doubtless he would have been pleased to thrill me with details about the famous writer's Ecolint connection.

This connection was underscored when, after joining Ecolint as a teacher in 1989, I discovered that Graves had on one occasion addressed our students, causing quite a stir. However, the only remaining colleague who had actually witnessed the event – another Latin teacher (and the Secondary School's iconic Librarian), the scholarly and sedate Mr. (Peter) Gras – was, with Victorian propriety, persistently coy about it, though I did manage to extricate from him the information that Graves' lecture had not been altogether audience-appropriate, and that – mysteriously – mushrooms somehow came into it. Only very recently, thanks to alumnus Álvaro de Soto – a distinguished diplomat and former Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations – have further details emerged:

"My favourite Ecolint memory is Robert Graves' talk to the upper classes of the English side, in the late 1950s. Visiting Lucía and Juan, his offspring, who were in the *Internat* [Boarding House], he was lured into speaking to the students. He simply stared at the ceiling, as if searching for words, and told us about the book he was writing at the time, about hallucinogens in ancient Rome and Greece. We came out of the Assembly Hall into the sunlight, in a psychotropic daze, our minds blown."

Álvaro's reminiscences made me wonder whether, to limit the risk of further embarrassment, Ecolint's publications at the time had eluded any account of Graves' idiosyncratic speech. However, I eventually unearthed a detailed eyewitness description of it in the 1960 issue of *Ecolint*, the school's annual publication devoted primarily to contributions from students, alongside a sprinkling of articles by members of staff. It does honour to our school's democratic inclinations that a student, Arthur Harris (then aged 16 – he graduated in 1961), was granted one-and-a-half pages in *Ecolint* to record his candid recollection of what Graves had to say. It makes for entertaining reading.

"If a man delivers a lecture to you on the subject of China, you generally expect him to have been there. I am going to give you a lecture on Paradise, and I have been there."

It was thus that Graves startlingly began his speech, and what followed was no less arresting. According to Arthur's meticulous summary, Graves claimed that all insights into Paradise throughout history and in all religions had specific features in common, which could be traced back to the hallucinations induced by drugs containing "a certain euphoriate" [sic]. Graves had identified hallucinogenic



Lucía Graves (bottom row, second from right) and Alvaro de Soto (top row, second from left) in the Greek Theatre, 1959

TALES FROM THE GRAVES

mushrooms as the typical medium giving rise to paradisiacal visions. He subsequently located some of these mushrooms in Mexico – where they were associated with the worship of the Aztec god Tlaloc – and travelled to Oaxaca try them out for himself, with highly satisfactory results. Graves found the hallucinations suitably transcendental, and had little doubt that they had given rise to archetypal notions of Heaven, but added that since prehistoric times, the “initiates of the cults that used them” had jealously restricted the access of others to these mushrooms. He was disappointed with scientific efforts being carried out in Basle to replicate synthetically the mushrooms’ active ingredients, as they did “not have the same vision-producing effects”.

Given Graves’ implicit advocacy of magic mushrooms as a shortcut to heavenly bliss, it’s understandable that Mr. Gras – a gentleman whose prudent, professed motto in life was “*Μηδὲν ἄγαν*” (“Nothing in excess”) – preferred to sweep his uncomfortable memory of the occasion under the carpet of decorum. Arthur, in contrast, gleefully referred to Graves as “the bad boy of the classicists”.

This amusing episode reflects the free-spirited, bohemian, maverick facet of Graves, who during his first marriage had formed a *ménage à trois* with his wife Nancy and the American poet [Laura Riding](#). Their unconventional relationship is the subject of “[The Laureate](#)”, a recent (2021) feature film.^[i]

It cannot be easy for a daughter to emerge from the shadow of such an illustrious, colourful, larger-than-life father and make a name for herself, but Lucía Graves succeeded in doing so,



Lucía Graves (courtesy of Virago Books)

both as a writer and translator. In the latter capacity, she is widely admired for the expertise and flair with which she has rendered in English the fiction of the Spanish-speaking world (most notably, the novels of Carlos Ruiz Zafón), and vice-versa: Hispanic readers owe to Lucía superb translations into Spanish of English literary works, including her father’s fiction, as well as that of Anaïs Nin and Katherine Mansfield.

Even more remarkably, she herself translated into Spanish her critically acclaimed autobiography, *A Woman Unknown* (Virago Press, 1999) and her own novel, *The Memory House* (Vineyard Press, 2002). Such a feat of fluid bilingualism among authors is exceedingly rare, if not unique – Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* comes to mind, but that is a spare, comparatively compact play.

[i] In 1973 there was an interesting overlap, perhaps worth mentioning, between Graves and another distinguished Ecolint guest, the great Swiss artist [Hans Erni](#) (who died in 2015 at the age of 106; six years previously, he had been present at the unveiling of his [60-metre mural](#), which adorns the entrance to Geneva’s UN headquarters). In 1972, Erni had inaugurated a prominent exhibition of Picasso’s work (of which he was an early admirer and promoter) in our school, alongside our Director General at the time, [René-François Lejeune](#). The following year, Collins published Graves’ new translation of the biblical *Song of Songs* (also known as the “*Canticle of Canticles*” or the “*Song of Solomon*”), illustrated by Erni. In a handwritten homage, reproduced in the volume, Graves wrote:

“Hans Erni is one of the few artists who could have done justice to the *Canticles*: indeed, I know none other equally gifted. His distinction is his ability to assist the author in celebrating profound sexual love without the least recourse to pornography. Swiss birth perhaps explains this. Hans Erni’s fellow-countrymen, though famous for their powers as sharpshooters – or perhaps because of it – have avoided war for centuries longer than any other nation in Europe; and it is the militaristic spirit that breeds pornography at the expense of true love.”

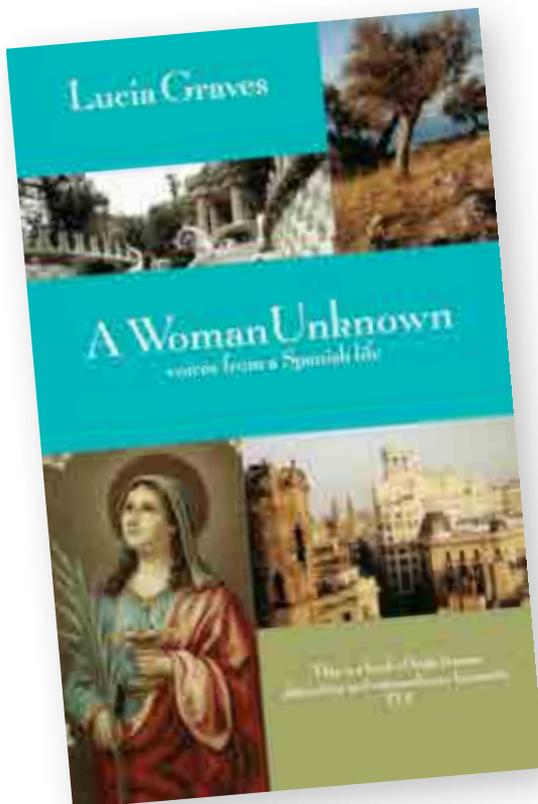
In *A Woman Unknown*, Lucía devotes a vivid chapter to her Ecolint experience, describing "Álvaro" – presumably, the previously mentioned Álvaro de Soto – as "one of the good dancers" whose attentions during the Saturday-night discos in La Grande Boissière's assembly/dining room (now partitioned into the *Pavillon des Langues* classrooms) the girls looked forward to excitedly. She also quotes from a letter that she addressed to her father at the time, in which she defended herself against the perceived severity of her English teacher, "Mme B." (i.e., Elizabeth Briquet), who described Lucía's spelling as "atrocious", and wondered what her father thought of her poor results in that subject. However, they had improved markedly by the time she left Ecolint, and it should be pointed out that her previous, Majorca-based education had been conducted entirely in Spanish.

It's also interesting to note that Lucía's History teacher was the future mastermind of the International Baccalaureate, Robert J. Leach – an eccentric genius, worthy of her father. Leach also launched the world's first simulation of the UN General Assembly by secondary school students, Students' United Nations / SUN, in which Lucía participated:

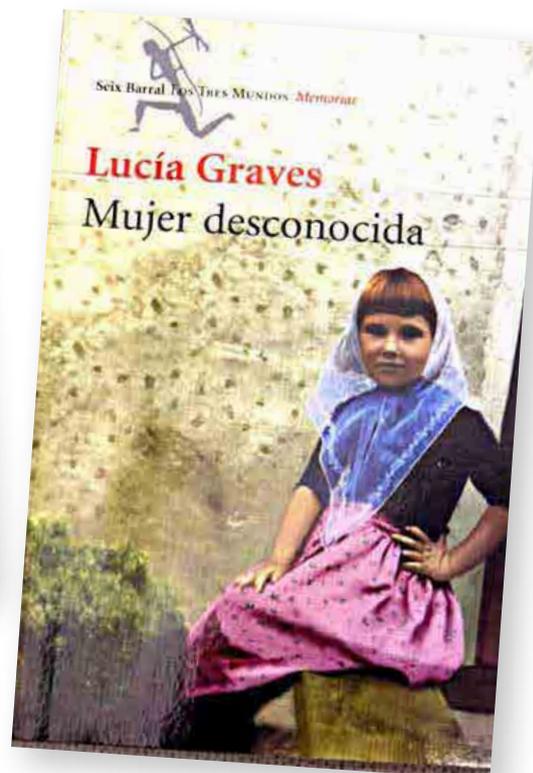
"(...) We put forth motions and debated the issues that were in the air at the time: the independence of African nations, the reunification of Germany, the unrest in Southeast Asia, world refugees, the industrial use of nuclear power. We wanted to be citizens of the world. The future that rolled out before us was decorated with streamers of multicoloured flags."

Lucía overlapped in Ecolint for one academic year with Douglas Hofstadter. He is not mentioned in *A Woman Unknown* – there is an age difference of a couple of years between them, so they may well not have consciously come across each other. However, in an interview published on-line by *Books Make a Difference*, when asked about her favourite books on translation, she highlights "Douglas R. Hofstadter's *Le Ton beau de Marot*, an amazing book, so inspiring, always on my desk."

If – as it is entirely possible – Lucía was unaware that Doug is a fellow Ecolintian, this spontaneous affinity across continents (Doug is Distinguished Professor of Cognitive Science and Computer Science at Indiana University Bloomington, and Lucía moved from Spain to London in 1991) points to a pleasing, inadvertent but beneficial communion of Ecolint-influenced spirits. Such is the hallmark of a great institution: it unites not only explicitly, but also in ineffable ways.



Lucía Graves' autobiography, *A Woman Unknown*



Lucía Graves' autobiography (own translation into Spanish)

L'IMPACT DE VOS DONNS

RAPPORT SUR LA PHILANTHROPIE 2022 / 23

“The generosity of Ecolint’s parents, alumni, staff, Parent Teacher Associations and external supporters over the past academic year provided vital resources, leading to a tangible, positive impact on the life of the school. As a non-profit Foundation, all of our revenues, whether from school fees, earned income or donations, are dedicated to continuing to provide an exceptional educational experience and environment for our students, and helping us to remain at the forefront of global educational innovation. Thank you to each and every one of you for supporting us in our mission to ‘educate students to be global citizens with the courage and capacity to create together a just and joyful tomorrow.’”

Conrad Hughes – Director General



L'ANNÉE EN CHIFFRES



Montant total récolté par la Fondation*



Nombre de dons



Nombre de donateurs

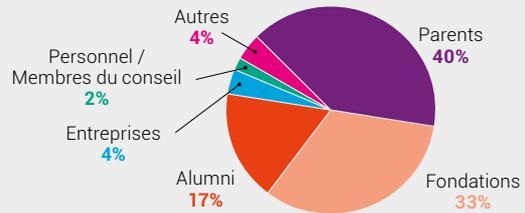


Subvention supplémentaire accordée à l'Ecolint par la Ecolint-American Fondation

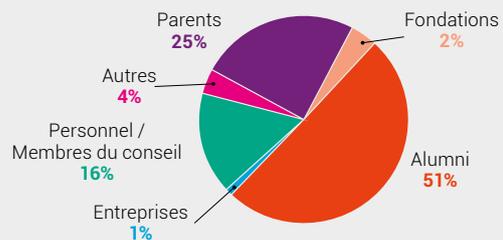
*Fonds reçus au 30 juin 2023, hors promesses

PROFIL DES DONATEURS

Participation des donateurs par montant total donné



Participation des donateurs par nombre de donateurs



THE IMPACT OF PHILANTHROPY ON OUR MISSION

Philanthropy has played a vital role in the success of Ecolint since its founding in 1924. While tuition fees cover more than 99% of our costs, it is your generosity that allows us to go beyond, providing additional opportunities for our students and allowing us to invest in initiatives that support our mission. While you gave to a number of areas across the Foundation, the vast majority of gifts in 2022-2023 were directed at two key priorities: the Ecolint Scholarship Programme and our “Building Healthy Minds in Healthy Bodies” campaign for the new *Centre sportif* at La Grande Boissière. There were also a number of unrestricted gifts for all three campuses - we look forward to reporting on their use later in the year.

THE IMPACT OF GIVING

HIGHLIGHTS

The Ecolint Scholarship Programme

Thanks to your support, we were able to offer fully-funded scholarships to three new talented young people, who would not otherwise have been able to access an Ecolint Education. Hosted on all three campuses, they have joined the five scholars who started the previous year, bringing the total number of current scholars to eight. The Ecolint Scholarship programme was relaunched in 2019 (the first-ever scholars joined Ecolint in 1929), and aspires to provide scholarships for up to 15 students per year, from next year onwards.

«Je souhaite par ces quelques mots exprimer mes remerciements auprès des donateurs dont la confiance et la générosité ont permis que j'intègre l'Ecole Internationale. En effet, la découverte de l'Ecole a été une très belle surprise de par son système scolaire, les différentes cultures et origines qu'elle accueille et l'ouverture d'esprit qui en découle. Cette année, j'ai connu un enseignement qui m'a permis d'apprendre davantage et de progresser de manière intéressante et positive. J'ai été ravie d'assister aux divers événements organisés par Ecolint notamment le bal de neige ainsi que la kermesse et je prévois d'y participer à nouveau. Je suis très reconnaissante de cette bourse qui m'a été accordée.»

D.I., Année 10, à l'Ecolint depuis 2022



Centre sportif – La Grande Boissière

The *Centre sportif* is finally reaching completion, and thanks to support from our community, we are able to turn it into an even more magnificent facility than originally planned. Over the past year we focussed on two areas that our Physical Education staff and Extracurricular Activities coaches identified as priorities: creating a truly motivating and interactive space in which our students can improve their overall strength and fitness, and upgrading our gymnastics equipment to Olympic standards, in order to allow young gymnasts to develop their skills far further than was previously possible. At the time of writing, the fitness centre is fully funded, and we are well on the way to achieving our target for the upgraded gymnastics suite. We can't wait to unveil this amazing new facility to the Ecolint community.



FUTURE PLANS

This year we will continue to seek funding for our Scholarship Programme, and for a number of other areas where philanthropic support could make a significant difference to our ability to fulfil our mission. We look forward to sharing more with you as the year unfolds.

To find out more, or to discuss ways to support the Foundation's mission, email us at supporting-ecolint@ecolint.ch

PROGRAMME DE BOURSES DISPONIBLES À L'ECOLINT – FAITES PASSER LE MOT !

En 2019, grâce à la philanthropie, nous avons relancé le programme de bourses de l'Ecolint, offrant des opportunités à des élèves qui n'auraient autrement pas les moyens de fréquenter l'Ecolint. Beaucoup de nos boursières et boursiers ont connu des difficultés et viennent de milieux qui ne sont pas représentés à l'Ecolint aujourd'hui. Cette année scolaire, nous avons accueilli trois jeunes boursiers, qui ont tous échappé à la guerre dans leur pays d'origine et qui espèrent construire un avenir meilleur avec le soutien de la communauté de l'Ecolint.

Alors que nous lançons la campagne de bourses 2024-2025, l'Ecolint propose jusqu'à huit bourses pour une admission en classe 10, 11 ou 12, pour un parcours anglophone ou francophone. Seules les candidatures répondant aux critères seront prises en compte. **Nous avons besoin de votre aide pour faire passer le message au sein de vos communautés respectives, qu'il s'agisse des écoles locales, des conseillers d'orientation externes ou d'institutions sociales : aidez-nous à faire en sorte que les élèves éligibles reçoivent l'information !**

Le délai de candidature est fixé au 31 décembre 2023. Pour plus d'informations sur les critères [cliquez ici](#) ou scannez ce QR code :



«Le programme de bourses de l'Ecolint crée des opportunités pour les citoyens et les leaders mondiaux de demain. Nos boursiers sont un groupe dynamique et courageux de jeunes issus de milieux divers qui partagent un engagement envers les valeurs humanitaires. C'est un grand privilège de les connaître et je suis constamment impressionnée par leur générosité d'esprit et par la curiosité, la passion et la détermination dont je suis témoin au quotidien. La bourse donne aux élèves la possibilité de rejoindre notre communauté internationale et de développer leurs connaissances, leur confiance et leur compréhension interculturelle dans un environnement stimulant et ouvert à tous.»

Kate Friend, Coordinatrice du programme de bourses

L'Ecolint est très reconnaissante à tous les donateurs qui ont soutenu cette initiative. Grâce aux nombreux membres de notre communauté, nous renforçons notre engagement de créer une communauté Ecolint volontairement inclusive et diversifiée.



As we launch the 2024-2025 scholarship campaign, Ecolint is making available up to eight scholarships for an entry in Year 10, 11, or 12, for either an Anglophone or Francophone route. Only applications fulfilling the requirements will be considered. We value your help in spreading the word among your respective communities, from local schools, guidance counsellors, to welfare organisations and community organisations: help us to ensure that eligible students hear about this opportunity!

The application deadline is 31 December 2023. For further information and list of requirements please visit [here](#) or scan this QR code:



"Becoming part of such a diverse community is an unforgettable experience as I have the opportunity to learn more about different cultures, religions and languages. Making friends from all over the world has increased my ability to understand different cultures and has been an interesting and exciting experience.

I find that the teaching methods make it interesting and fun even when the topics are difficult to understand and serious. The teachers are supportive and want the students to do well. It has also been a great opportunity to improve my language skills, practising English and French with native speakers is a great experience."

Scholarship student, Year 10, Campus des Nations.

Results of the 2023 elections to the Governing Board

Congratulations to the five elected Board members

Ijeoma AGHANYA – La Grande Boissière

Brendan McGIVERN – La Châtaigneraie

Frank MOSER – La Châtaigneraie

Svetlana RYZHIK – La Grande Boissière

Ivana SIROVIC – La Châtaigneraie

Nirmalya SYAM – Campus des Nations

Contact : board@ecolint.ch

Information about the Alumni World Reunion

You can now book your accommodation in five hotels with negotiated rates for the Alumni World Reunion (AWR). Make sure you consult the dedicated page on *Ecolint Connect*, the alumni platform, to check the rates and regular updates. Click [here](#) to visit the page.

The AWR will take place from Thursday 13 to Sunday 16 June 2024 in Geneva, across the three campuses of Ecolint. Class dinners will be organised by alumni volunteers on Friday 14 June.

Diners de l'Escalade



Alors que l'été touche à sa fin, il est déjà temps de commencer les préparations pour les traditionnels dîners de l'Escalade organisés par les volontaires dans le monde entier.

Si vous souhaitez organiser un dîner, contactez-nous à alumni@ecolint.ch afin de recevoir votre marmite en chocolat. Tous les événements seront listés sur *Ecolint Connect*, le site dédié pour les alumni. Avec plus de 20 dîners organisés chaque année, vous trouverez certainement des ancien.es avec qui chanter «Cé qu'è lainô» et déguster du bon chocolat suisse !

SOCIAL MEDIA

Ecolint on Facebook	facebook.com/ecolint
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Ecolint on Instagram	@ecolintgeneva
Alumni on Facebook	facebook.com/ecolintalumni
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Alumni on Twitter	twitter.com/ecolintalumni

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Telephone:	+41 (0)22 787 25 55
Web:	connect.ecolint.ch (Alumni can update their own details on the website.)