

On behalf of RCE Greater Burlington, we would like to extend our gratitude to everyone who participated in the 8th Americas RCE Meeting, and the many organizations that generously provided logistical and financial support. The three-day meeting was held on September 23-25, 2019 and attracted participants from 11 RCEs representing five nations across South, Central, and North America. A core group of 35 Vermonters joined the 31 out-of-town delegates to participate in events that took place at Shelburne Farms, University of Vermont, and various locations in the City of Burlington.

Participating RCEs:

- Borderlands Mexico-USA
- Cuenca del Plata
- Curitiba-Parana
- Georgetown
- Grand Rapids
- Greater Atlanta
- Greater Burlington
- Greater Portland
- North Texas
- Puerto Rico (candidate)
- Saskatchewan
- Shenandoah



Participating Partners from RCE Greater Burlington:

- Shelburne Farms
- University of Vermont
- City of Burlington
- Gedakina
- Champlain College
- Middlebury College
- Burlington City & Lake Semester
- Rock Point Center
- Community Sailing Center
- Intervale Center
- Sustainability Academy
- ECHO Center



The theme of the meeting was *Human Health and the Environment*, and many of the participating RCEs gave presentations highlighting the intersection of SDG 3 (Good Health and



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Well-Being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). In addition, SDG 13 (Climate Action) was featured at a public forum entitled *Mobilizing Climate Action For Health*, which took place on September 23 – the same day as the UN Climate Action Summit in New York City – and was attended by over 180 people.

The overall goal of the gathering was to bring together people of diverse backgrounds, ages, cultures, nationalities, sectors, and disciplines to share and discuss emerging ideas, strategies, and challenges in the realm of education for sustainability. By holding elements of the meeting at different venues and field sites in the Greater Burlington area, we hoped to stimulate dialogue among the participants and foster the overall level of relational synergy within the RCE Americas network. To that end, the meeting had several highlights:

Engagement with youth from local schools. High school students from *Burlington City & Lake Semester* facilitated a robust discussion of the Sustainable Development Goals during an afternoon visit to the Community Sailing Center, while middle school students shared about their involvement in the award-winning *Cultivating Pathways to Sustainability* program. UVM students served as discussion facilitators at the Climate Action public forum.



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Participation of Abenaki educators. Judy Dow of Gedakina welcomed visitors to Abenaki land, and led an exploration of Burlington's complex history that featured the importance of the Intervale to the indigenous people of the region. Chief Don Stevens shared an Abenaki creation story and harvest celebration song at the evening gathering at Shelburne Farms. Their participation underscored the critical role of indigenous voices in shaping a sustainable future.



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Experiencing Shelburne Farms. Participants had the opportunity to explore the programs and working landscape of Shelburne Farms. Many of the visiting delegates stayed at the Inn at Shelburne Farms, and all participants had a chance to learn about the education for sustainability programs and enjoy the local food grown on the land.



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Transdisciplinary support from Higher Education. Sponsorship of the networking dinner prior to the public forum on September 23 was provided by all eight of the academic colleges and schools at the University of Vermont.



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Champlain College and Middlebury College also sponsored events and meals. This unified showing of support for the RCE approach from across local campuses



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was emblematic of the growing commitment of higher education to the Sustainable Development Goals, and the power of linking sustainability initiatives across disciplines.

Follow-up Learning Journeys. The optional learning journeys led by partners in the Greater Burlington Sustainability Education Network following the meeting were well-attended. Several delegated



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returned to the Burlington Waterfront for guided tours of the ECHO Center and Rubenstein Ecosystem Science Laboratory, while another group visited with *Burlington City and Lake Semester* and



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Sustainability Academy in the City's Old North End.

Engagement of Leadership. In addition to the welcome address provided by Burlington Mayor Miro Weinberger to open the meeting at Rock Point Center, UVM President Suresh Garimella and Shelburne Farms President Alec Webb each offered welcome addresses at the events they hosted.



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Visitors from Puerto Rico. We had the honor of welcoming a delegation from Puerto Rico at the meeting. Puerto Rico has applied to become an RCE in 2020, and each of five members of their delegation made substantive contributions to various aspects of the meeting. For example, Adrianna Gonzalez was a featured panelist at the public forum, and shared stories of the impacts of Hurricane Maria on human health in Puerto Rico.

Hosting the meeting here in Vermont was a valuable and rewarding opportunity for all of us associated with RCE Greater Burlington, and we feel that it will both galvanize our regional network and strengthen relationships across the Americas as we work together during the critical decade that lies ahead.

Sincerely,

Megan Camp
Jen Cirillo
Tom Hudspeth
Walter Poleman

Co-coordinators, RCE Greater Burlington



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