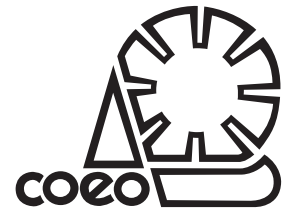


# Pathways

THE ONTARIO JOURNAL OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION  
Winter 2016, 28(2)



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2016

# Pathways

## COEO

Formed in 1972, the Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario (COEO) is a non-profit, volunteer-based organization that promotes safe, quality outdoor education experiences for people of all ages. We achieve this by publishing the *Pathways* journal, running an annual conference and regional workshops, maintaining a website, and working with kindred organizations as well as government agencies. Members of COEO receive a subscription to *Pathways*, as well as admittance to workshops, courses and conferences. A membership application form is included on the inside back cover of this issue of *Pathways*.

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## Pathways

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It appears that “Backpocket,” the long established *Pathways* column, has a very large fan base. The [pathways@coeo.org](mailto:pathways@coeo.org) inbox receives many emails throughout the year requesting more Backpocket articles and whenever one appears in the journal, it is often followed by some great feedback from our readers. Unfortunately, the demand for this content is usually greater than the supply, as we generally only collect one or two Backpocket submissions per year.

As regular readers of *Pathways* are likely aware, the Backpocket column contains all sorts of goodies—instructions for games and activities, processing tips and techniques, lesson plans, teaching ideas and connections to specific topics, among other things. Given this, it’s no surprise that Backpocket is a favourite column of so many practitioners. The Editorial Board of *Pathways* would like to increase the amount “backpocket” or everyday practical material contained within the pages of *Pathways*. And so moving forward, our hope is to maintain the wonderful blend of content that *Pathways* is known for, but also respond to the content requests of COEO

members and our readership worldwide. To assist us in this task, we would like to extend an invitation to COEO members, readers and other fans of Backpocket who might like to contribute to the journal—we want to know, “what’s in your backpocket?”

Individuals or groups interested in submitting a Backpocket article, or any other content to *Pathways*, should first visit [www.coeo.org/pathways-journal.html](http://www.coeo.org/pathways-journal.html) and download a copy of the recently updated Guidelines for Authors and Artists. There you will find instructions explaining the submission process, a listing and description of all the *Pathways* columns and of course our contact information. Want to pitch an idea and receive feedback prior to submitting an article or paper? If so, please contact the *Pathways* Editorial Board at [pathways@coeo.org](mailto:pathways@coeo.org). We are more than happy to respond your inquiries, and to assist authors in shaping their content for the journal.

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Kyle Clarke  
Editor

**Sketch Pad** – Michael Greenberg got his start in wilderness tripping with Darrow Camp in the 1970s. Paddling through Maine and Canada, Darrow used traditional tripping techniques, including tump lines and wood and canvas canoes that could be rebuilt or repaired from what was abundantly available in the bush. In the process he fell deeply in love with the wilderness. Michael has always loved to draw, most recently using a digital pad where he draws like he’s using a pen, pencil or, sometimes, crayon. His drawings in this issue were done on the smallest Wacom Cintiq available, largely because he leads a nomadic life and it fits in his pack. An engineer by day and organic farmer by night, his heart is never far from the wilderness. His art appears on the cover and pages 3, 11, 13, 14, 20 and 21.

Thanks to Michelle Gordon for her regular “on-request” art submissions. Michelle is an environment and resource studies co-op student at the University of Waterloo. She is fascinated with ecological restoration, and loves getting kids inspired about nature through her work with the p.i.n.e. project as an outdoor educator. Her art appears on pages 4, 9 and 10.

Taia Steward is a Grade 11 student at Tohoku International School in Sendai, Japan and was a participant in the Students on Ice 2015 Arctic Expedition. Taia’s art appears on pages 17, 28 and 30.

Roszita Mat Zin is a staff participant who joined the Students on Ice 2015 Arctic Expedition from Malaysia. Her art appears on page 25.



Gratitude. Abundance. Simplicity. These buzz words seem to be the hallmark of the new year. As I sit writing this, Make Peace With Winter is winding down for another year, and there is a definite buzz of energy amongst our participants. The landscape of Camp Pinecrest is caked in a fairy wonderland of snow, and laughter is filling the air as COEO members learn from each other. I feel a debt of gratitude to those who are contributing to COEO this year. We have an abundance of energy, ideas, creativity, motivation and spirit keeping our organization moving forward for the sake of our students. And Dave Hawke, our Make Peace With Winter keynote speaker, has reminded us that some of the simplest ideas in outdoor education are those that endure.

Make Peace With Winter is known to be a magical gathering, slower paced than the fall conference, yet just as rewarding. Members who have attended over the years have spoken of leaving the winter conference feeling energized and armed with an abundance of new ideas to use with their students the very next day. This year has been a resounding success, once again, with a mix of long-standing members and students sharing knowledge and resources. For creating this space for our members to share, we owe gratitude to the conference organizing committee, led by Karen O'Krafka, and including Emily Clark, Kyle Clarke, Tobin Day, Lindsay Kemble and Heather Law. We also thank Camp Pinecrest and their very accommodating staff for all of their support for our conference. I am confident that many of the ideas shared at Make Peace will enrich outdoor experiences for students across the province this winter!

More exciting things are also afoot for COEO members in the coming months!

Emerging trip guides and wilderness enthusiasts will not want to miss the second annual OWLS conference, April 15–17, 2016. Planned for Ganaraska Forest, The Ontario Wilderness Leadership Symposium will bring together emerging and experienced wilderness trip guides with mentors and experienced leaders. If you are

interested in presenting at OWLS, please contact conference organizer, Liz Kirk at, [conference@coeo.org](mailto:conference@coeo.org).

The 2016 Annual Fall Conference is scheduled for Camp Wanakita, September 23–25, 2016.

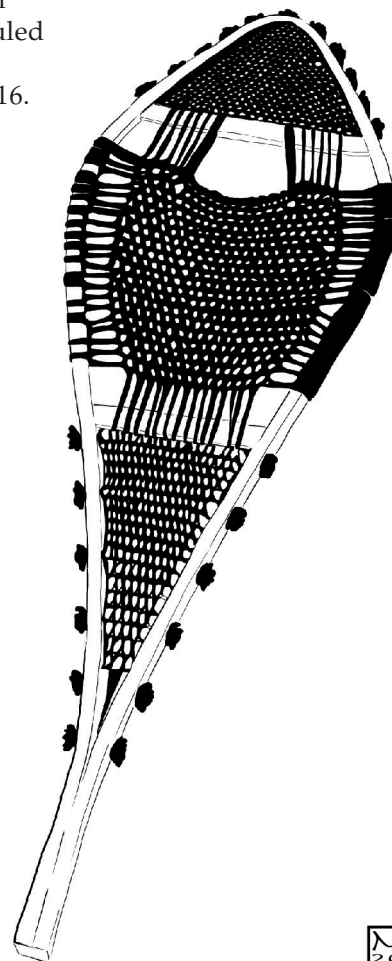
The conference will focus on traditional skills and folk traditions. Please keep an eye on the website for the details regarding a call for presenters and more. If you know of someone who would provide an excellent keynote address or workshop, please let the conference committee know at [conference@coeo.org](mailto:conference@coeo.org).

COEO continues to run on the steam of our many exemplary creative and talented volunteers. If you are interested in becoming involved in any of COEO's many projects, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Karen O'Krafka at [karenokrafka@yahoo.ca](mailto:karenokrafka@yahoo.ca). Karen can help you find your COEO niche!

May your year simply be abundant with outdoor fun and learning.

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With gratitude,  
*Deborah Diebel*  
COEO President



## The Mountaineering Experience

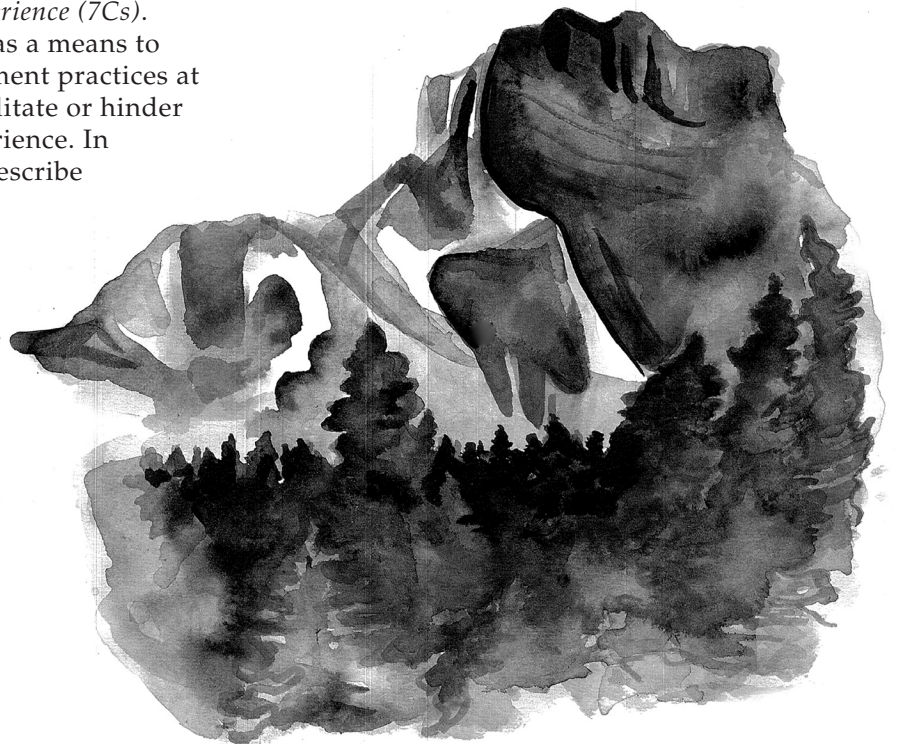
By Mary Benjamin and Michael Quinn

Recreational mountaineering is a complex pursuit that continues to evolve with respect to demographics, participant numbers, methods, equipment and the nature of the desired experience. Mountaineering often occurs in protected areas where agency managers are charged with the inherently conflicted mandate of protecting the natural environment while facilitating high-quality recreational experiences. Effective management of such mountaineering environs is predicated on meaningful understanding of the users' motivations, expectations and behaviours; currently there is little research on these experiential elements. Our research explored the experience of recreational intermediate alpine and ski mountaineers through content analysis of mountaineering literature and key informant interviews. We identified a set of critical factors that influence mountaineering participation and constitute optimal outcomes: the *7Cs of the Mountaineering Experience (7Cs)*. The 7Cs were developed as a means to assess how land management practices at mountaineering sites facilitate or hinder the mountaineering experience. In this paper our aim is to describe the critical factors of the experience.

The mountaineering experience has been described as complex, multifaceted and paradoxical, often transcending the physical climb to reach profound levels of self-awareness and satisfaction (Ewert, 1994; Pomfret, 2006). While climbing, mountaineers may experience seemingly dissonant feelings (e.g., sense of control and vulnerability)

and, as a result, their expectations, preferences and desires are complex. Reasons for participation appear to go beyond amusement or reward. The experience involves many elements and the composition of each mountaineer's experience is unique and highly subjective.

Mountaineering is many things. It is climbing on ice, snow and rock, panoramic views and wilderness experience. For many, it is the fulfillment of childhood dreams, and for others, an opportunity to grow in the face of difficulty. In the mountains await adventure and lifetime bonds with climbing partners. The challenge of mountaineering offers a chance to learn about oneself outside the confines of the modern world (Cox & Fulsaas, 2003, p. 14).



In recent years, mountaineering has undergone considerable change not only in participant numbers, methods and equipment, but also climbers' desires and expectations. It has been suggested that mountaineering has evolved into an intricate combination of techniques and values that are often in conflict with each other. There appears, for instance, to be a discrepancy between desire and satisfaction among mountaineers, along with a perception of being able to control these competing factors that complicates their experiences (Loewenstein, 1999). These changes have altered mountaineers' relationships with their physical environment, with resultant environmental, social and cultural impacts on the world's mountain environments and peoples.

Mountaineers are part of a unique community of recreationists, worthy of research attention due to the fragile, high alpine environments in which they practice their sport. However, there is limited research on which to base an understanding of participants, and specifically the key influences on their participation and/or the experience they seek (Nepal & Chipeniuk, 2005). We hypothesized that ethnographic and phenomenological approaches would prove effective in the discovery and delineation of the optimal experience. We imagined that the critical factors framework would primarily benefit parks and land managers, but would also support mountain guides, climbing clubs and outdoor educators in pursuit of high quality, educational experiences for their clients, members and students.

Much of the literature on the mountaineering experience is found in popular works of non-fiction. The detailed documentation of one's trip is an attempt to reflect upon and share elements of participation, and is a key part of the mountaineering experience (Loewenstein, 1999). Ethnographic and phenomenological approaches were used to scrutinize 36 of these popular non-fiction accounts, along with 90 previously

collected transcripts of interviews with some of Canada's elite mountaineers, to determine the critical factors essential to the experience. A qualitative, emergent theme analysis was conducted on both sources of data, and a list of key themes was developed. All of this was presented as *The 7Cs of the Mountaineering Experience*. The 7Cs refer to factors that influence mountaineering participation including desires, expectations and resulting benefits: *Challenge, Control, Community, Context, Creative Opportunities, Catharsis* and *Chrysalis*, each of which has a variety of components (shown in Table 1).

### Challenge

*Challenge* refers to the physical and mental demands of climbing. Mountaineers appear to be driven by a passion for difficulty and excitement in anticipation of hardship. They crave the sense of accomplishment achieved through the mastery of technical skills. It appears to be a very personal factor in the experience and its importance is based on the individual's skill level.

### Control

*Control* refers to a perceived control of one's destiny because of well-honed climbing skills and mountain literacy, whilst recreating in an uncontrollable environment. Despite the mountaineer's desire to pit his or her strengths and knowledge against the forces of the mountain, there is an attraction to the unknown and the uncertain outcomes of risky situations. This form of recreation requires serious commitment from its participants, who seem to be motivated by the potential for danger and death and equally by the sensation of flow and of being alive. The first juxtaposition of the experience is exemplified here with mountaineers' desire to be self-reliant yet vulnerable.

### Community

*Community* is the third factor of the experience. It is a motive for

mountaineering participation due to the “fellowship of the rope” (Scott, 2011), referring to the fact that climbers are tied to their partners and ultimately responsible for each others’ lives. Bonds formed between mountaineering partners have been likened to those formed between military personnel—comradeship that cannot be rivalled.

### Context

*Context* refers to the physical setting in which the recreation takes place and the mountaineers’ connection to and interaction with that space. *Context*, unlike the six other Cs, is present in all positive and negative mountaineering experiences. It is evident that the mountaineers’ interface with the elements is what attracts them. Simply viewing the mountains from afar, although enjoyable, is not as valuable as an interaction *with* them. The degree to which mountaineers interact with their complex environments seems to vary. While some climbers appreciate the minutia of the experience (e.g., the colours of the ice beneath their crampons), others focus on the broader perspective (e.g., the scenery and the grandeur of the landscape that surrounds them).

### Creative Opportunities

One of the necessary components of adventure recreation is the ability to make decisions and to think creatively, with confidence in the face of risk. The inspiration gleaned from discovering new places and actively choosing to take part in difficult experiences is an essential element of the experience. The imaginations of some mountaineers also appear to be stimulated by a historical connection to legendary climbers, their exploits and first ascents of celebrated routes.

### Catharsis

Despite the presence of risk, danger and occasionally fear, it would appear that mountaineers experience a sense of relief and relaxation while climbing. Just as

one can experience an escape through meditation, so too can one feel a release, a sense of freedom and simplification from mountaineering (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Coupled with the solitude that the mountains can provide, these feelings produce the vital element of *Catharsis*.

### Chrysalis

In order to pupate into adulthood, a caterpillar must transform its body into a protective shell, thus allowing it to rearrange its cellular makeup and then emerge as a butterfly. The shell that houses this metamorphosis and redevelopment is called a chrysalis. In the context of the mountaineering experience, *Chrysalis* mimics the caterpillar’s transformation, referring to the development of the mountaineer’s spiritual and therapeutic connection to his or her form of recreation. It signifies the positive, life-affirming changes that the mountaineer undergoes and the resultant appreciation for the life-enhancing qualities of this activity. It is the most esoteric of the 7Cs in terms of its explicability to those who have not experienced it.

The narrative data showed that the 7Cs do not influence the mountaineering experience individually. Instead, they form an interconnected framework, composed of complementary (e.g., risk and exhilaration) and contradictory factors (e.g., solitude and camaraderie) (Fig. 1). Their paradoxical nature appears not to hinder the experience, but rather to support it.

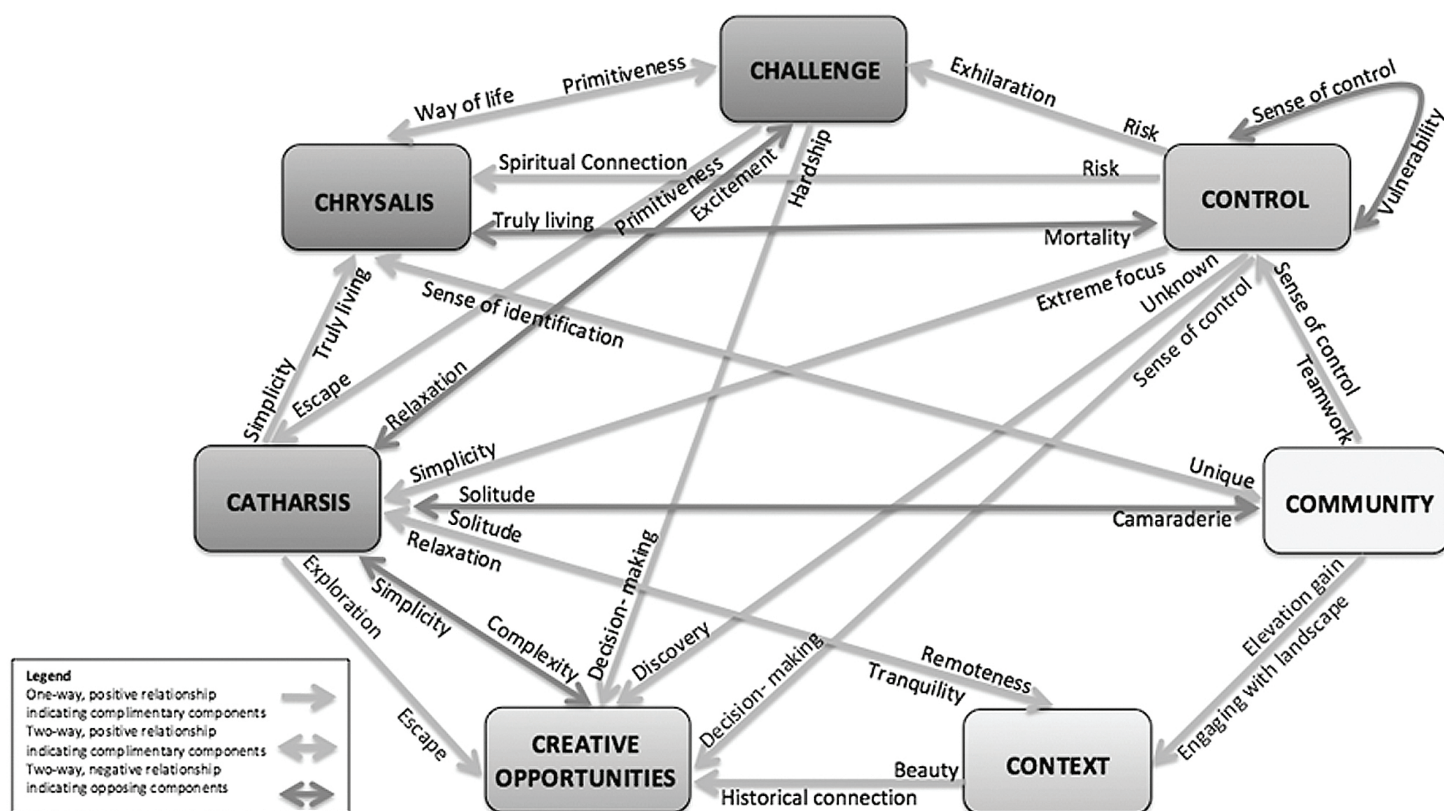
To assess the validity of the 7Cs, key informant interviews were conducted with two categories of participants: 1) professionals and experts (i.e., mountain guides, parks and land managers, climbing clubs and interest groups, and subject matter experts), and 2) intermediate mountaineers. An evaluative, manual content analysis was used to analyze the data.

Interview data validated the 7Cs and confirmed that a multidimensional



CHALLENGE	CONTROL	COMMUNITY	CONTEXT	CREATIVE OPPORTUNITIES	CATHARSIS	CHRYSLIS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental and physical challenge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of control</li> <li>• Self-reliance</li> <li>• Independence</li> <li>• Lack of external rules and restrictions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friendships</li> <li>• Camaraderie</li> <li>• Sharing</li> <li>• Sense of community</li> <li>• Teamwork</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wilderness experience</li> <li>• In touch with nature</li> <li>• Engaging with landscape</li> <li>• Environmental consideration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem solving</li> <li>• Complexity</li> <li>• Decision-making</li> <li>• Learning process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mindlessness</li> <li>• Simplification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Therapeutic</li> <li>• Spiritual connection</li> <li>• Emotional connection</li> <li>• Self-discovery</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excitement</li> <li>• Exhilaration</li> <li>• Adventure</li> <li>• Adrenaline high</li> <li>• Fun</li> <li>• Happiness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiencing the “unknown”</li> <li>• Vulnerability</li> <li>• Uncertainty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uniqueness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scenery</li> <li>• Beauty</li> <li>• Geography</li> <li>• Rhythms of the natural world</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Captures imagination</li> <li>• Induces passion</li> <li>• Stimulating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relief</li> <li>• Relaxation</li> <li>• Release</li> <li>• Escape</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspires confidence</li> <li>• Self-esteem</li> <li>• Sense of identification</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical act of climbing</li> <li>• Skill mastery</li> <li>• Technical difficulty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extreme focus</li> <li>• Engagement</li> <li>• Heightened awareness</li> <li>• Flow</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elevation gain</li> <li>• Summit Fever</li> <li>• Tick lists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remoteness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discovery</li> <li>• Exploration</li> <li>• Travel new places</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liberty</li> <li>• Freedom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affirmation and enhancement of life</li> <li>• “Truly living”</li> <li>• “Way of life”</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accomplishment</li> <li>• Fulfillment</li> <li>• Reward</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Real consequences</li> <li>• Serious commitment</li> <li>• Danger</li> <li>• Risk</li> <li>• Mortality</li> <li>• Fear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognition</li> <li>• Competition</li> <li>• Mentorship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peace</li> <li>• Tranquility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historical connection</li> <li>• Mountaineering idols</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solitude</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deprivation</li> <li>• Hardship</li> <li>• Primitiveness</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variety</li> </ul>			

Table 1. *The 7Cs of the Mountaineering Experience*



**Figure 1. Complementary and Contradictory Components of the 7Cs**

synopsis of the optimal experience can provide managers, guides and educators with a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence participation. The 7Cs should not be ranked by importance, nor motivations for participation separated from their benefits. The key informants did not seem able to reconcile their conflicting desires exhibited in Figure 1, nor did they seem concerned about the dissonance. It appears that the experience is a suspension between the two ends of the continuum and is dependent on the individual to negotiate these tensions.

Our research exposes that, while the number of people participating in recreational mountaineering continues to increase, expectations of participants are evolving and expanding. Mountaineers are engaged physically, emotionally, intellectually, socially and soulfully in their recreational pursuits. The 7Cs reveal that wilderness experience is key to their

enjoyment of the sport. Their concern for the environment and desire to participate in a sustainable way is markedly enhanced by others' observation of environmental best practices. Additionally, the tight-knit social structure of the group that favours mentorship, self-policing and reflection encourages responsible recreation. While on expedition, mountaineers disengage from the outside world and experience a protracted connection to their ever-changing environments. They yearn to experience the rhythms of their natural surroundings, to escape the monotony and chaos of daily life, to revel in the paradoxical complexities and simplicities of the mountains, and as a result, they develop a profound understanding of the virtues of time spent in the wilderness. Land managers, guides and educators need to be aware of these motivations and the resultant environmental impacts so that mountaineering sites can be better managed and the optimal experience provided.

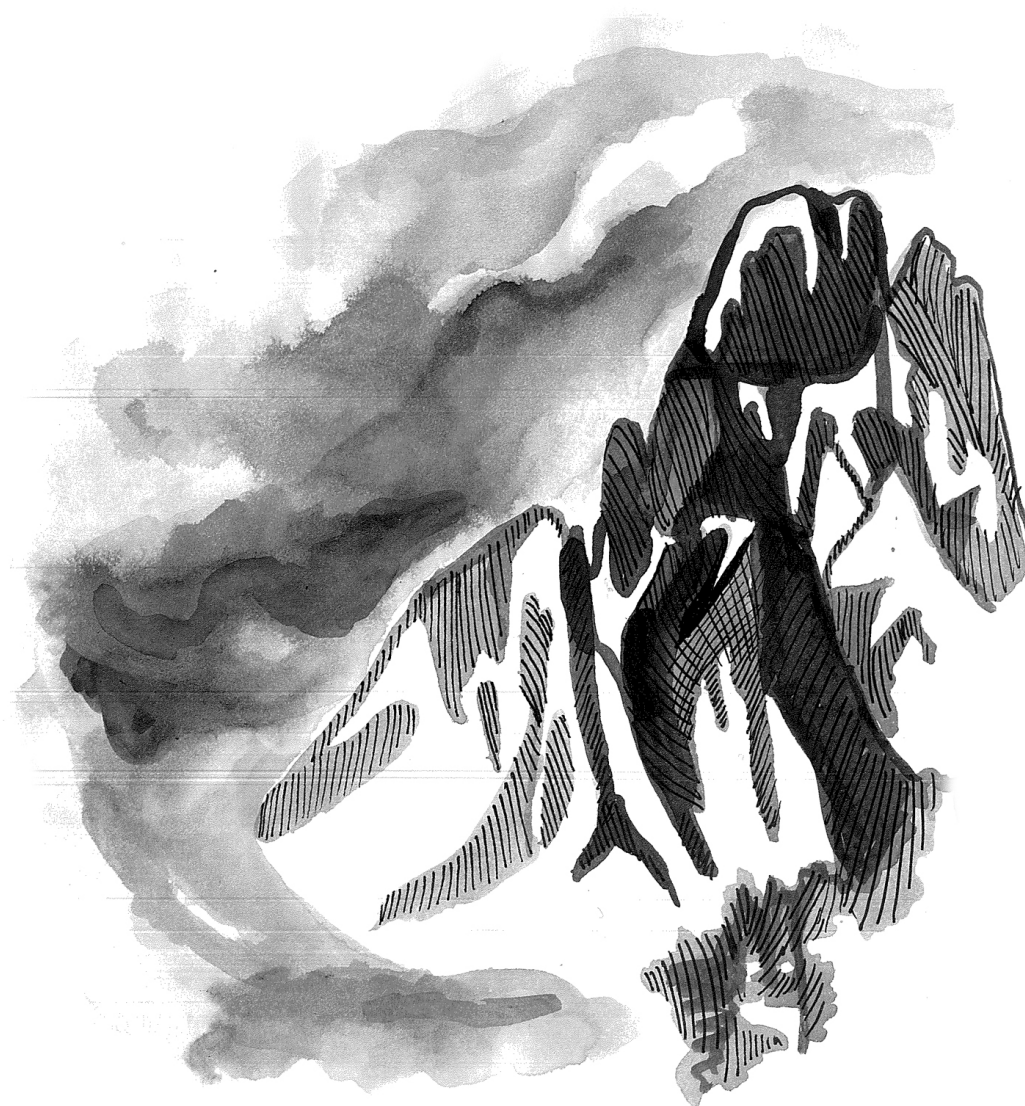
We propose that mountaineers be understood as a hidden recreational asset, deserving of serious attention by park managers, mountain guides and outdoor educators. Through effective communication and engagement practices, mountaineers can become active stewards for our parks and protected areas. Their awareness of and relationship to the landscape, their comrades and themselves allow for both outward and introspective views of responsible use, sustainable practices and conservation. Their engagement as stewards for our mountains would not only serve to enhance their mountaineering experience and to positively contribute to the mountaineering community, but also to protect and preserve the ecological integrity of mountaineering sites. With recreationists seen as active participants in their landscapes and engaged as such, there will be less conflict between park management and visitors, a greater

mutual understanding of their respective responsibilities, motivations and expectations, and the successful fulfillment of the once conflicting dual-mandate.

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## Communicating Nature's Meaning in Unnatural Writing: Strategies for Presenting Experiential Values to Scholarly Audiences

By Andrew Case

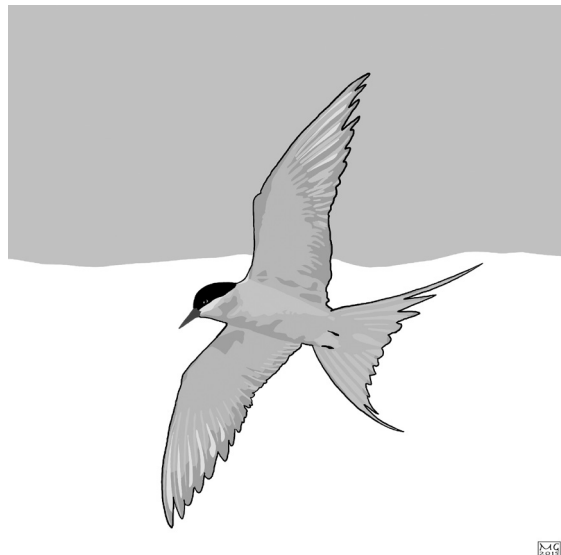
Many students in the second or third year of their undergraduate degrees lose their sense of purpose and begin asking, "why am I here?" There are myriad methods of coping with this feeling, particularly come exam season. I've seen students drink too much, drop out or simply pack up and move into the library. I experienced this ennui at the end of my second year. I had just finished reading Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* and wished for nothing more than to trade my series of study sessions and due dates for Dillard's remote cabin lifestyle. I said so to my housemate and close friend, Anthony, whose response was uncharacteristically enthusiastic.

Almost exactly one year later, Anthony and I were, once again, writing essays and studying for exams. But, this time around, we were also preparing a thru-hike of Newfoundland's East Coast Trail.

You see, in our third year, Anthony and I applied for McMaster University's Renaissance Award, a scholarship that funds experiential learning outside of the applicant's primary field of study. Anthony and I, applying to hike and camp, never expected to be funded. Yet we were successful, in part, thanks to the wisdom of our supervisors, who helped us understand how to craft a proper grant proposal.

Most of us in the field of outdoor education, as well as anyone who has had to describe the value of education in natural spaces to an urbanite or academic, understand the difficulty of putting nature's value into words, especially scholarly language. The answer to the aforementioned question, "why am I here?" is often found in nature, but it is not so easy to describe. Communicating the purpose and value of outdoor experience in a manner that resonates with a professional, academic audience is the task at hand.

In *Nature First* (2007) one of the authors, Bob Henderson, describes bringing a course proposal to a university's social sciences curriculum committee. The course was rejected because the out-of-classroom portion—a canoe trip—was not considered to be properly educational. The committee commented, "That's Phys.-Ed. That's fun." (Henderson & Vikander, 2007, p. 145). Later, the proposal was revised and re-submitted: "Camping became 'the primitive arts.' Canoe travel became 'traditional modes of travel.' The proposal was reluctantly accepted" (Henderson & Vikander, 2007, p. 145). Later Henderson notes that the experience taught a valuable lesson: the importance of writing to one's audience.



But what processes can reliably produce a result that our colleagues across disciplines will take seriously? I do not claim to be an authority on the subject, but I certainly learned a great deal from my own successful grant proposal. The strategies I employed, which I believe were at the root of my proposal's success, are discussed below. I will address each approach in turn and, at the beginning of each section, include an

excerpt from my grant proposal, typed in italics. My hope is that this might be helpful to those in the field of outdoor education who are writing their own proposals, essays and presentations for academic audiences.

### Strategy 1: The Philosophical Approach

*‘The blue light of the television flickers on the cave wall. If the fellow crawls out of the cave, what does he see? Not the sun itself, but night, and the two thousand visible stars. Once, I tried to converse with him, the fellow who crawled out of his blue-lit cave to the real world. He had looked into this matter of God. He had to shout to make himself heard: ‘How do you stand the wind out here?’ (Dillard, For the Time Being, 31–32)*

Long before the Common Era, Plato’s allegory of the cave demonstrated the value of perspective and the inability of those staring at shadows to even conceive of a reality greater than the projections on the wall in front of them. More than 2000 years later, as we read in the passage above, Dillard re-affirms the relevance of Plato’s allegory, but with a twist: it is no longer a fire that casts the shadows on the cave wall, it is a television screen.

Philosophy is a useful tool across academic disciplines, and its status as a scholarly pursuit makes it an ideal foundation upon which the outdoor educator can build when writing a proposal. In the passage above, Plato’s allegory of the cave is brought into a modern context, with some help from Annie Dillard. Together, they allow the author to suggest that a retreat from society can affect the sort of epiphany the man freed from the cave experiences. This is powerful for a number of reasons.

First, it makes use of a very well-known allegory, written by a famous author. Secondly, it uses a previously established and recognised metaphor to explain why the retreat from society is an important educational experience. In combination with the quote from Dillard, it suggests, in philosophical terms, why nature’s value is so difficult to explain to the uninitiated. Experiential knowing is achieved through

experiential learning, and the individual who has “crawled out of his blue-lit cave” has not been exposed to either. Accustomed only to the television screen, it is remarkably appropriate that the only conversation he can muster is a banal comment on the weather. Being enclosed in a passive, receptive system of information transmission, he has forgotten what it means to learn by experiencing.

Another advantage of using philosophical texts thusly is to display to the reader that one is well-read and has the ability to make powerful connections between dissimilar texts. At the same time, it establishes the proposed retreat’s abstract value—it shows that it is not just physical education or fun.

### Strategy 2: The Literary Approach

*The wild is the antithesis to civilization though, and the trip into the wilderness has, since the beginning of recorded history, been a source of perspective and personal transformation. From The Epic of Gilgamesh, in which Gilgamesh, as a result of a trip into the wild, learns to be a just king instead of a tyrant, through to more modern works such as Walden, the story of Henry David Thoreau’s first year living in the woods near Concord, which influenced the thought of figures such as Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., there is evidence for the value of the trip into the wild to both the individual and society.*

The literary approach mirrors the philosophical in a number of ways, but brings with it a concreteness that philosophy, by its nature, lacks. I like the above passage because it references so many concrete examples wherein the natural retreat has offered incredible value to academia and to society as a whole. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, the first story, as far as we know, to ever be recorded in writing demonstrates the transformative power of the wilderness. *Walden*, an equally famous piece of writing, is a testament to the value of the retreat from society *per se*, but it also is a work upon which great men and women have built their beliefs. By mentioning Gandhi and King, the passage above displays that

travelling in natural spaces need not only transform the traveler—the account of the journey, brought back into society, can carry nature’s transformative power with it.

By carefully selecting literary works with which the audience will be familiar and by referencing those works’ influences on society, one can establish the concrete value of natural learning to a scholarly audience. This, combined with the abstract value communicated by the philosophical approach, creates a powerful argument for the importance and value of outdoor education.

### Strategy 3: Referring to the Goals of the Institution

*The stated goal of the Renaissance Award is to facilitate interdisciplinary exchange which may ultimately lead to societal benefit. This is a goal congruent with the priorities and principles of “Forward with Integrity”, the open letter to the members of the McMaster community written by President Deane in 2011. Our project conforms remarkably to the principles and priorities that Patrick Deane establishes in his letter, as we will now demonstrate.*

*Our project reflects the comprehensive approach to cultivating human potential that President Deane calls one of McMaster’s principles. Furthermore, by combining an autoethnographic pursuit with a historical, literary tradition, our project embraces an interdisciplinary, broad-based approach to research, as “Forward with Integrity” endorses with its second principle.*

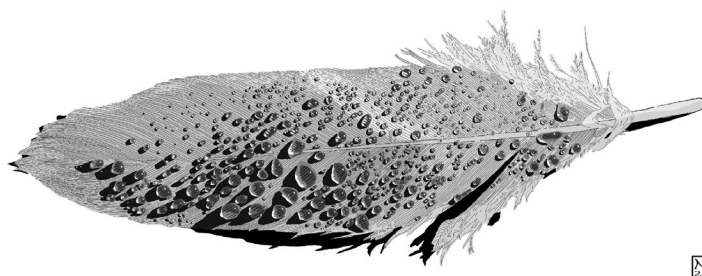
This strategy lacks in every way the subtlety of the previous two approaches, but in its directness lies its power. A committee offering funds to applicants wants to select persons whose goals are aligned with their own. By perusing an institution’s mission statement and other important relevant documents, the writer can discover a wealth of jargon. In university documents, phrases like “problem based learning,” “human potential,” and “interdisciplinary” will likely appear repeatedly. Recycle these terms; by including the funding institution’s

buzzwords in your applications, you establish your willingness to conform your pedagogy to their principles. Moreover, it displays that your thinking is in line with the institution’s goals, and that funding your proposal will further their interests.

### Strategy 4: The Pedagogical Approach

*The approach to undergraduate education generally stresses learning from outside sources rather than creative, self-inspired thought. Appropriate sources of knowledge for the undergrad are professors and textbooks, to a large extent. Our project subverts this system: instead of gaining knowledge from outside sources, we will be learning from experience – learning from ourselves. We believe that the potential for creative, original thought is fostered by this experiential method of learning more than it is by a traditional approach.*

*Once our highest duty becomes getting a degree rather than learning, we fail to achieve our potential as academics and as human beings. We fall into the trap of living “As if [we] could kill time without injuring eternity” (Thoreau 7).*



Grant proposals submitted within the field of outdoor education and, for that matter, in all academic disciplines, are often done by persons wishing either to learn or to teach. In both instances, the applicant’s learning plan will be crucial to the success of their project. By explicitly addressing pedagogy, an applicant makes clear that she has adequately considered not only what she seeks to learn and teach, but also how this goal will be achieved. Moreover, the unique approach to learning taken by outdoor education makes the pedagogical approach vastly more relevant, given that many

universities currently emphasise problem-based and experiential learning.

The passage above focusses on how outdoor learning is distinct from classroom learning. This was done because the Renaissance Award requires applicants to propose an experience outside of their primary field of study. The passage establishes that the proposal is in line with the goals of the award because its pedagogy is radically different than that found within the classroom. As such, not only does the passage display the thought the authors gave to their learning process, it also reinforces the conformity of the project to the funders' goals.

## Conclusion: Language and Integration

When writing about outdoor education in an academic setting, one must consider how to bring together the above strategies and how the scholarly language provided by each approach might contribute to one's writing. As Henderson (2007) observes, camping and canoeing, to the academic committee, are just fun, but "the primitive arts" and "traditional modes of travel" are, apparently, academically rigorous pursuits. Language is a powerful tool. In addition to the approaches themselves, the philosophical, literary and pedagogical methods are valuable sources of jargon. By using the scholarly language provided

by these disciplines and the literature of the funding institution itself, the student or instructor in the field of outdoor education can arm herself with the tools necessary to communicate with her peers across disciplines both powerfully and convincingly.

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## Outdoor Education Inside the Classroom?

By Steven Watts

At this point we are more than aware of the educational possibilities of the outdoors, yet when we bring nature into the classroom these educational outcomes significantly shift. I would argue that these attempts at “indoor–outdoor education” fail to provide students with connections to nature and teach them about real world ecosystems. Indoor–outdoor education, referring to attempts to integrate elements of outdoor education into the classroom, should not be used as alternatives to outdoor education.

According to Stewart Hudson, the need to incorporate into learning outdoor education and hands-on activities is a challenge facing educators (Hudson, 2001, p. 284). Resistance to outdoor education often hinges on schools’ obligations to limit risks and fulfil curriculum guidelines. Although these obligations are important, it is also critical to consider that students are losing their connection with nature and its social, educational and biological benefits. It has been said outdoor experiences provide students with concrete materials, knowledge and phenomena that cannot be found in a formal classroom (Felix and Johnson, 2013, p. 188). Additionally, Arjen Wals suggests the outdoors should be considered more than just a place to learn; it can provide a space for development, critical thinking, personal exploration and reflection (Wals, 2015, p. 191). In saying this, one must also recognize that the current generation of students has a much different relationship with the environment than those of previous generations specifically because of technological mediation and shrinking access to natural areas (Hudson, 2001, p. 284).

As a way to engage students in meaningful interactions with nature and, at the same time, meet curriculum requirements, programs have been developed to bring elements of nature into the classroom. In Hamilton, Ontario a community not-for-profit known as The Bay Area Restoration Council (BARC) has developed an

experiential learning activity to connect students with Cootes Paradise, a local wetland sanctuary. To do so, BARC provides “Classroom Mini Marsh kits” for various schools to grow in their classrooms. The kits are meant to be a scaled representation of Cootes Paradise marsh and include a bowl, gravel, native plants and a snail. Participating teachers are encouraged to return their kits to the Royal Botanical Garden (RBG) Nature Centre where volunteers will then plant them in the marsh. These kits are to be grown throughout the semester and ideally integrated into aspects of daily learning.

As part of my master’s degree research at McMaster University I organized and facilitated a qualitative evaluation of BARC’s Mini Marsh program. Under the supervision of Dr. Philip Savage, Associate Professor in the Department of Communication Studies and Multimedia at McMaster University, I recruited approximately 40 undergraduate students to conduct focus groups with roughly 75 elementary students who had participated in the Mini Marsh program. The focus groups explored the successes and limitations of the Mini Marsh kids, and also the students’ first-hand experiences using them. Although the research yielded many valuable results, the limited impact of bringing nature into the classroom was particularly interesting in the context of outdoor education.

As part of the program, schools are also able to organize field trips so students, teachers and parents can assist in the planting of their Mini Marsh in Cootes Paradise. This added activity allows participants to connect with the Hamilton Harbour ecosystem on a more personal level (The Bay Area Restoration Council, 2015). Furthermore, the ability to make a difference in a local neighbourhood can generate a sense of activism and a desire for engagement in environmental initiatives (Stephens, 1996, p. 72).

Upon talking to the 75 elementary students it was revealed that none were offered the opportunity to take a field trip to Cootes Paradise and experience the marsh. While teachers used the in-class marsh as a way to educate students about wetland ecosystems and local organisms, the delivery of the program did not meet all of the intended outcomes. When asked to recall aspects of their Mini Marsh experience, students' knowledge was limited to the snails and the name of one marsh plant—duckweed. When discussing the program, it was clear a strong relationship developed between students and the snails, with most school classes naming their snail and expressing concern for its displacement from its native habitat. Although students expressed a great deal of interest in the snail, many could not recall the purpose of the program. Only a few students could identify the connections between their marsh and real world marshes, and specifically Cootes Paradise. Along with the kits teachers are provided with information about Cootes Paradise and the local watershed, which is to be used in tandem with the hands-on elements of the program. Despite these resources, the lack of consistent connections made between in-class learning and Cootes Paradise significantly impacts the intended learning outcomes of the program.

In terms of community, outdoor education can assist those doing environmental work locally. For example, the field trip element of the Classroom Mini Marsh program provides support to RBG staff and volunteers who are already working to restore Cootes Paradise. Moreover, seeing youth engaged locally may catalyze community interest in environmental initiatives. If students show a commitment to a healthy environment and share this message with their community, there is potential for broader investment in these initiatives.

BARC staff emphasize the notion of stewardship in relation to their environmental education programs, especially relative to the Classroom Mini Marsh. Yet some participating students

claimed to be bored when taking care of the marsh because they simply watered it. The intention of the program is to provide students with a hands-on opportunity to interact with a marsh; however, many students suggested their teachers restricted access to the marsh. Opportunities to interact with the marsh one-on-one were sporadic and even non-existent. In the focus groups, students reported that even when permitted to interact with the marsh they were required to stand at a distance. Due to these heavily controlled and irregular interactions, the stewardship component was missing from students' experiences. More so, the rules enforced around nature in the classroom can potentially influence students' real world perceptions and experiences with nature.

### Indoor–Outdoor Education

The avoidance of field trips to Cootes Paradise is not necessarily a surprise given the current approaches to education, and specifically environmental education. Teaching students about nature within the classroom provides teachers with control over time, student safety and the lessons taught. Implementing outdoor education often requires overcoming institutional barriers, such as health and safety approvals. Although there can be significant barriers, the value in this type of learning is socially, ideologically and physiologically significant (Byrd, Taylor Haque, Tai, McLellan, & Jordan Knight, 2007, p. 43–44). Outdoor education also provides opportunities for students to apply knowledge learned in the classroom to real world problems. Visualizing and experiencing environmental problems re-enforces the severity of local issues and can evoke a willingness to take action. As the literature suggests, environmental education often relies on past experiences of students and teachers; thus, exposing teachers to local environmental issues can develop these experiences and interests. Indoor–outdoor education provides schools an opportunity to incorporate nature into daily learning while effectively managing risk and meeting curriculum guidelines; however, the lack of outdoor experiences for

students and teachers can have educational, biological and social consequences.

The trend of indoor–outdoor education is a product of the tension between institutional frameworks and outdoor education. An unfortunate result of this tension is a culture of liability and a resulting “criminalization of play” (Louv, 2008, p. 29). Specifically, in response to increased liabilities, many organizations have established stringent, and sometimes fickle, waivers to protect themselves against lawsuits. As a result of this liability culture, the effort needed to engage in outdoor education has increased dramatically. With already strict timelines and duties placed on teachers, a mammoth health and safety waiver is not always feasible and therefore may be excluded in their approach to education.

### A Curricula Conundrum

Efforts by BARC to create curriculum ties for the Mini Marsh program are important for recruiting schools to participate in its work. These efforts also point to a politicization or institutionalization of education, in particular the avoidance of outdoor education. Specifically, I am pointing towards the disassociation of outdoor education from current paradigms of curriculum-based learning and its dismissal as an appropriate teaching method. The hyper-focus on curriculum-based learning funnels time, effort and resources away from engagement and even consideration of outdoor education. As a result of long-standing approaches to teaching and current trends in curriculum, outdoor education does not neatly fit into distinct areas of the curriculum and wrongfully falls outside of the education spectrum (Brookes, 2002, p. 407). When looking at the curriculum links for BARC’s Mini Marsh program, one can see these curriculum trends as they solely highlight in-class elements and do not appeal to aspects of outdoor education.

### Restrictive Pedagogy

In the case of the Classroom Mini Marsh program, the McMaster research suggests



students had limited interactions with the marshes. Additionally, during any opportunities to interact with the kits, teachers enforced strict classroom guidelines and rules. It is assumed these classroom rules are attempts to avoid accidents in the classroom, such as spilling of the marsh. However, for students, these rules impacted their experience with the marsh by restricting hands-on outcomes of the program. More broadly, rules in the classroom have been shown to affect learning and students’ understanding of reality (Boostrom, 1991, p. 193). The engagement with rules by students, whether it be embracing them or rejecting them, forges short- and long-term behaviours and perspectives about themselves and the world (Boostrom, 1991, p. 193). In saying this, one cannot discard rules in the classroom; rather, recognition of their effects on education settings and residual real world impacts is valuable.

The enforcement of punitive measures during the Mini Marsh program says something about teachers’ perceptions of the program in relation to classroom teaching. With limited access to the marsh, students are expected to focus on the written material and general science-related content provided by the teacher. In addition, classroom restrictions can suggest to students that nature in the real world

embodies these same rules and delivers similar consequences for not following them. In other words, if students are taught they cannot interact with a marsh in the classroom, this tendency may be projected onto their interest and motivation to interact with real marshes.

The use of indoor–outdoor education provides an interesting gaze into paradigms of learning and pedagogical approaches. Even more interesting are the cultural undertones of bringing nature indoors. In the case of the Mini Marsh program the plants often become a decoration at the back of the classroom. What can this teach students about the intricacies and realities of real world environmental issues? At its best, students can grow healthy local organisms in their classroom, yet without experiencing the marsh many important educational, biological and social outcomes are nonexistent.

Balancing in-class environmental education and outdoor education appears to be reliant on local organizations, such as BARC, developing comprehensive programs for schools to use. The move to strict curriculum-based learning requires these organizations to find new ways of linking regional curriculum guidelines to rewarding, accessible environmental education programs. The ability for teachers and students to engage in the marsh planting is tightly wedged between RBG, BARC, and the participating schools. These layers of organizational frameworks, communication, and available resources often evoke molasses-like speed and effort towards outdoor education. In the case of the Mini Marsh program, the molasses is thicker than ever—much like the muck on the bottom of Cootes Paradise.

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- Steven Watts recently completed his Master in Communication and New Media Degree at McMaster University. In Hamilton, Ontario Steven has been involved with many environmental organizations doing communications work, program development and outreach.



## Service Learning: Meaningful Summer Professional Development

By Lisa Martins

*The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.*

—Mahatma Gandhi

As teachers we strive for new adventures, memorable moments and lifelong learning. We are not comfortable sitting back and waiting for good things to happen; we are go-getter, create-your-own-destiny, find-your-own-happiness types of people. Let's face it, we have to be in order to keep up with the high-energy, inquisitive students we have the pleasure of teaching everyday. Many teachers find themselves embarking on new experiences in search of activities that will contribute to their professional development. For the avid adventure-seeker, service learning is the way to go.

According to St. Francis Xavier University, service learning can be described as "an innovative way to integrate experiential learning, academic study and community service." It provides an outlet for teachers to share and craft their expertise within unique communities. More importantly, it is an experience filled with life lessons that cannot be easily forgotten. The rewards you take with you are invaluable and cannot be obtained from a book or online course. Service learning can be truly life-changing.

I recently had the opportunity to travel to Belize with St. Francis Xavier University as part of the Master of Education program. Our goal was to establish a free summer camp for the children in a small rural community. The main source of income for many of the residents lies within the tourism and hospitality industry or small farming. The homes were modest—one-room structures that typically housed several family members and a couple of generations. Electricity and indoor plumbing was a luxury enjoyed by few. While the community values education and the opportunity it provides, it is an expense

that cannot always be afforded. Primary education is free with the exception of uniforms and schoolbooks. High school can cost between \$350 and \$500 USD per year.

Among other things, service learning in a developing country offers participants the chance to develop a deeper understanding of how vastly different, and yet also similar, we all are. In our case, through our interactions with the students of Belize we learned a lot about their culture, families and way of life. Consider some of my most memorable moments:

*My experiences through international service learning have taught me to look deeper, beyond the presenting behaviour, in order to better understand the child and address their most pressing needs.*

**Natasha.** I will never forget the story of little Natasha. When I met this shy four-year-old girl, I instantly felt a connection. Each day she would wait for me to return from lunch to hold her hand and guide her on the 30-minute walk to the river for swimming lessons. She spoke very little but her 14-year-old sister shared her family's story. Natasha and Shahyra live a meek life, surviving off a daily diet of beans and rice. They belong to a family of five girls (after recently burying their 15-year-old sister who died of skin cancer). Their father works at a hotel in the nearby tourist area and their mother is bed-ridden due to illness. Shahyra and her two older sisters have been given the task of managing the family and raising the two youngest girls. Shahyra will not be attending high school with her peers; instead she will be transporting Natasha to and from school every day.

**Darwin.** Darwin is a charming six-year-old, determined to keep up with his older brother and friends. His little bare feet would maintain a steady pace during our daily walk. He acted cool as a cucumber while happy to hold my guiding hand the whole way there. On our walk I asked Darwin what he wanted to do when he grows up, a question I have posed many times to my kindergarten students in Toronto. His immediate reply was common enough—a soldier—much like my students at home who played police officer at the classroom’s drama centre. His reasoning, however, was not something I was ready to hear. He continued, “I want to catch the bad guys that sell drugs and make fake money. I will bring them to the station and let them use the bathroom. When they go to the bathroom they will escape and I will let them.” Confused, I asked him why he would want the bad guys to escape. He replied, “Because they will pay me a lot of money.” At this moment I experienced a gut-wrenching reality check. Was I really having this conversation with a six-year-old?



**Dylan and Dorian.** Dylan and Dorian are two very rambunctious brothers, both under the age of five. Each day they would bring their high-energy to camp and seek the attention of the teachers. This was usually in the form of kicking, hitting, climbing and essentially terrorizing the other students. Keeping these two out of trouble and off the other children was a challenge, to say the least. We knew we had to find out more about these two boys in order to manage their behaviour. Through inquiry amongst the community

members, we learned their mother is a teenager and the father is no longer present in their lives. While the mother has the support of extended family members, the family is known to be violent and aggressive with the children. Clearly this contributed to the behaviour we encountered with Dylan and Dorian.

## The “Learning” in Service Learning

Understanding the background of our students is an important starting point for helping to enable their progress. A child who is not focused and gazes idly into the distance may be trying to ignore the rumble in their belly. A child who is demonstrating aggressive behaviour may be seeking attention from an adult, possibly even asking for help. My experiences through international service learning have taught me to look deeper, beyond the presenting behaviour, in order to better understand the child and address their most pressing needs. I have used these life lessons to change the way I teach and manage my class. I make sure to give my students an option for an early morning snack when I see they need it. I explore possible solutions for students who are acting out once I learn more about their home life. These are all things we may take for granted if we do not allow ourselves to open our eyes and take part in professional development. It is easy to get so wrapped up in the busyness of the job that we risk forgetting how to really serve our precious students.

Our educational focus in Belize was to promote physical literacy, wellness and learning through play. More and more Ontario teachers are experimenting with play-based learning in their classrooms. At the moment the concept resides in the kindergarten classroom, but we are experimenting with exploring the benefits in the other grades. Learning through play is about developing lessons that will engage students regardless of their background or possible communication barriers. Children around the globe need to play and learn through hands-on

activities. It may not have been the structured classes the Belizean students were used to, but they gained so much from our play-based activities. The cooperative games helped students to work as a team and solve problems together. The music lessons forced children out of their comfort zones; it encouraged them to take a chance and try something new, even though they were at the risk of failing. Through playing with the tin whistles we brought, the students were able to explore patterning through musical notes and finger movements. Our science activities may have looked fun and messy, but they also taught students about the physical states of matter along with the difference between soluble and non-soluble substances. Our young students learned through doing and so did the teachers. What better way to learn how to implement new programming like play-based learning than to see it in action?

Service learning can greatly contribute to one's professional development. For those entering the career it is a valuable way to gain hands-on experience, and this can open doors to teaching positions down the road. The uncertainty of being in a foreign space can help to improve your ability to handle ambiguity and further develop the ability to be flexible in a learning environment—a skill every educator needs. Immersing yourself in another culture, and more specifically a socio-economically disadvantaged community, allows you the opportunity to learn more about social issues and the root causes of some of these struggles. The entire experience invites you to explore your values and pre-existing beliefs. And it helps you to see the world of teaching, community partnership and social justice in a new light.



### Final Reflections

What makes a country? It is not the crystal clear waters, the white sandy beaches or the breathtaking mountain peaks. It is the people you meet that bring the nation alive! A person may travel their whole life but never really make a connection to the people or places they visit. Service learning allows you to be more globally aware, a skill that will even hold its value in your home classroom as you encounter ethnically diverse students with various life circumstances. If you are truly looking to make a difference, to learn more about students, foreign lands and also yourself, then take a step out of your comfort zone and experience all that service learning has to offer.

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*Lisa Martins is currently a kindergarten teacher in the Toronto Catholic District School Board and also has experience teaching early physical education.*

## Expedition Cruising: Paradox, or the Best of Both Worlds?

*By David Newland*

I'll jump straight to the conclusion: I think expedition cruising is the best of both worlds. But then I would say that—I'm a host, performer and Zodiac driver with Adventure Canada. I make my living working aboard expedition cruises to the remote reaches of Newfoundland and Labrador, Sable Island, the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Greenland and the Northwest Passage.

Having declared my bias, I'll now proceed to make my case. But first, a primer on what expedition cruising is.

Adventure Canada pioneered expedition cruising in the Canadian Arctic, and later in Labrador, a quarter-century ago. The idea was to take interested travellers to the "blank spaces" on the map: places without roads, ports or, indeed, amenities of any kind. At this time, a new concept in travel was being born: research vessels and former spy ships from the Cold War era were equipped with Zodiacs (rigid inflatable boats, Jacques Cousteau style) and pressed into service. Food and accommodations were basic, staff were rugged and knowledgeable, and the destination was everything.

Inuit hamlets, calving glaciers. National parks, pristine fiords. Derelict RCMP stations and abandoned Hudson's Bay Company posts. Geological anomalies. Archeological treasures. For the intrepid traveller, weary of overly visited destinations, cookie-cutter hotels, endless lineups and packaged fun, the appeal of travelling from point to point by ship then making landing by Zodiac was obvious. Awareness of the concept grew, and expedition cruising, particularly in the polar regions, came to represent a small but important segment of the travel industry.

A constant evolution of the ships and their amenities was matched by growing expertise on the part of crew and staff, and in turn, increasingly savvy travellers.

Most expedition cruises already enhanced their offering with seasoned explorers and scientists, who filled the hours spent steaming between remote destinations with lectures on their individual areas of expertise. Adventure Canada added folk singers like Ian Tamblyn, authors like Margaret Atwood, historians like Ken McGoogan, archaeologists like Latonia Hartery, filmmakers like John Houston and—crucially—Inuit culturalists like artist Andrew Qappik, hunter and fashion designer Aaju Peter, actor Lamech Kadloo and many many more.

In the process our expedition cruises began to take on an artistic sensibility, but more importantly, to function as important opportunities for cultural exchange—and indeed, of economic exchange, as Inuit hamlets with little or no tourist infrastructure were able to welcome travellers who arrived on self-contained ships with no need for provisions or accommodation.

The birth of Nunavut, concerns about climate change, sensitivity to polar ecology, and continuing fascination with the Northwest Passage and the Franklin story in particular led to increased interest. As baby boomers began to retire, expedition cruising became an increasingly popular travel option.

At Adventure Canada, we often refer to our voyages as "cruises for people who don't like cruises." True, expedition cruise ships have become more comfortable—our current ship, *Ocean Endeavour*, has pleasant ocean-facing cabins, a spacious dining room, a small spa and gym, a library and facilities for presentations, entertainment and workshops. But the model remains distinct from the familiar Mediterranean and Caribbean cruises. There are no lounge acts, no pineapple drinks with parasols. No floating shopping mall, no casino. No skating rink!

There are really two main kinds of activities:



visiting destinations, which we typically reach by landing our Zodiacs on a beach, and programming based on enhancing those visits.

Musical entertainment will reflect the places we see and the people we meet; whether it's throat-singing from the Inuit culturalists aboard, or original songs from a troubador who drives Zodiacs by day and makes music by night. Presentations from recognized experts treat every conceivable subject of interest, from Arctic sovereignty to the Franklin mystery to social challenges facing Inuit communities. Photographers like Freeman Patterson, Michelle Valberg, Mike Beedell and Scott Forsyth work with passengers to help them capture and reflect the best of their experience. Travellers try their hand at watercolour painting, Inuit printmaking and Arctic games and even get a taste of "country food": narwhal, muskox, caribou, ptarmigan, char and the like.

The experience is unique, in part because the travellers are discerning. Expedition cruises are not cheap. A good deal of research and thought goes into choosing to spend ten days to three weeks aboard a ship travelling, say, from Kangerlussuaq in western Greenland to Kugluktuk in western Nunavut. Our passengers are active, curious people, usually with a lifetime of interesting experiences. These are folks who have travelled widely, have worked in interesting fields, and are not interested in retiring passively.

I distinguish tourists from travellers in this way: tourists want more comfort, more indulgence, and better weather than they experience at home. They want to come home the same as they left, but better rested, preferably with a tan and some happy memories. Travellers are people who seek to be changed by the experiences they have. Our travellers are life learners. They continually challenge us to know our stuff, to show them the very best of experiences, and to offer a greater depth of understanding than merely visiting someplace new.

We see them on their hands and knees,

photographing the exquisite flowers of the tundra, and bundled up on the bridge wings scanning the horizon for whales. We see them clad in a rainbow of Gortex, following a rocky trail to a high ridge above a sparkling fiord. The grins on their faces as we load our Zodiacs and head for the edge of a calving glacier say it all.

Of course, no kind of travel comes without impact. We fly in and out of our start and end points, and we burn marine fuel to travel by ship. All of us, staff and travellers alike, measure and consider these factors in choosing to do what we do. In my view, the impact of what we do is counterbalanced by the benefit we bring to the communities we visit, and the causes we support (ranging from Project North to the Royal Canadian Geographical Society). Even more importantly, we seek to educate our travellers about the places we visit, inquiring into the ecology, culture and history of some of the last best places on the planet to go exploring. Our passengers arrive as visitors, and return, we hope, as ambassadors.

For some of us, any amount of comfort is too much; I respect the true explorers, who go by kayak or dogsled into truly rugged and difficult conditions. What expedition cruising offers is a taste of that life, for those who can't or won't go in that fashion—augmented by an educational, artistic and cultural enrichment that simply can't be enjoyed in any other way.

Is expedition cruising a paradox? Perhaps, but if so, it's one worth embracing. I think our travellers agree that it offers the best of both worlds—and the very best of this world we live in, so vast, so inviting, and so rewarding to explore.

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*David Newland was recently named a Fellow of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society. David hosts, drives Zodiacs and performs music aboard expedition cruises to the East Coast and the Arctic. In the off season he travels the country, offering performances and presentations based on his travels.*

## The Jack Pine

By Rebecca Dale

Jack pine trees are so commonly found in northwestern Ontario and Manitoba that they appear to never end. You arrive at your campsite and you're surrounded by tall, skinny trees with rough bark and branches growing in strange directions. Everywhere you look, thin gnarled jack pines stand tall along shorelines. You might even compare them to that group of tall, gangly kids from high school who were all limbs.

Jack pines don't make very good pack hang trees and they don't provide much shelter, but the more you learn about them, the more interesting and inspiring they become.

Jack pines are only able to open their pinecones and spread their seeds in extreme heat; these extremely high temperatures are only present in the midst of a forest fire. While devastating for all other life, jack pines thrive after a forest fire has swept through an area. The result: even more jack pines. You just can't get rid of them!

In the most adverse conditions, when no other life can remain, the jack pine can start anew and recover from the tragedy. This tough tree reminds us to stand tall, be adaptable and strive to recover from even the worst situations. Milton Acorn, a Canadian poet, wrote "The Jackpine

grows to any shape that suits the light, suits the wind, suits itself." So take some advice from a jack pine, and be exactly who you need to be.

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*Rebecca Dale is a second-year student in the Outdoor Adventure Leadership program at Laurentian University. She spends her summers taking youth on canoe trips in Manitoba, and aspires to be an adventure journalist in the future.*



## Floating Classrooms for Armchair Vampires

By Garth Pottruff

Today's youth have become armchair vampires sucking in huge amounts of knowledge. They are smart as hell, but foreign to reality. The inconvenience of bugs, hot sun and uneven ground simply doesn't exist if one stays indoors!

The Floating Classroom uses the Grand River near Paris, Ontario as a backdrop to re-connect youth to the outdoors. It offers students a three- to four-hour adventure during which they board a raft with naturalists, foresters and historians and paddle into a world that activates the senses and offers liquid medicine for the soul.

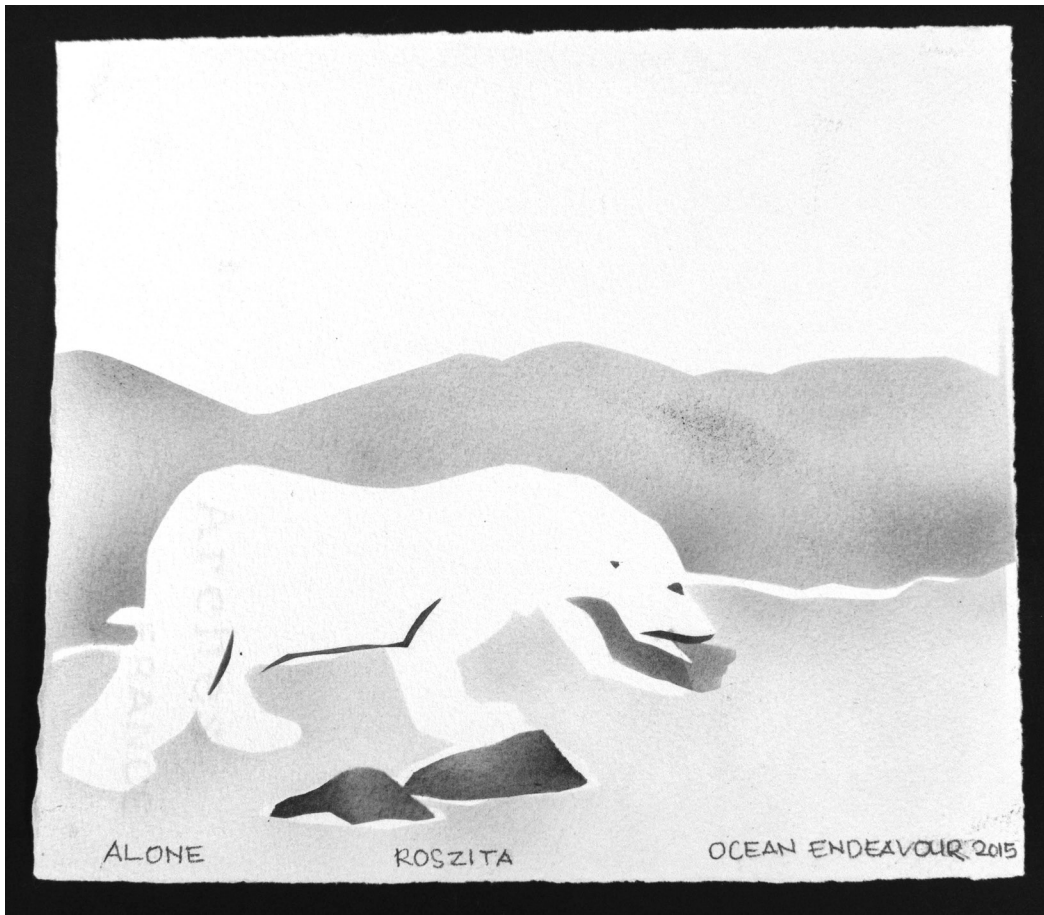
Eight-person rafts are used on a gentle flowing river. The rafts are very stable and will not tip over. The only way to fall out is

if your neighbour pushes you out, and we encourage everyone to be nice to everyone else! If by chance you do end up falling out, simply stand up. The river averages one metre in depth.

The very act of rafting creates teamwork. With paddles in hand, students quickly learn the art of navigating the river, with a guide ensuring the desired direction!

As students paddle, the guide reads a "Joe Bushman" quiz to create banter. Responses range from ridiculous laughter to amazing insight. There are tough inventive questions like, "which animal in the valley fights bum to bum?" an "how can you keep pots shiny without scrubbing?"

Playing together quickly occurs as the evil



raft sneaks up to splash others. Added are shore challenges like “Blind Man’s Race” and “Cook dat Egg” wherein each team is given a pot, egg and matches. The goal is to build a fire, boil the egg and eat it. The desire to win develops team strategy, including deciding who’s “gonna” eat the egg!

Along the way students can bodysurf down a gentle river swift. They are amazed at the power of the water as they walk against it. There is the opportunity to dump out the fake stuff from their water bottles and fill up with the real stuff from shoreline springs.

Hikes are added to give a “feel” for the Carolinian Forest around. There is the chance to see beaver chews, try wild edible plants and learn native remedies. Tree identification is taught using the quirks of smell, touch and taste. There are climbs to panoramic classrooms with tales of the Neutral Nations below.

Storytelling in the rafts is honed with history. Each guide has a repertoire of tales about wildlife and facts that quickly absorb the student and, as a result, questions flow. The highlight is the unexpected spotting of wildlife—the tail-flagging deer, a plummeting osprey or the flash of a fish. The excitement of “where is it?” catches everyone’s attention!

Alternative students thrive in this world of hands-on storytelling. Pretentious veneer is peeled back with each new experience. These are the students who don’t want the trip to end, and who continue to talk about it for days after.

The rafts create a community where the act of “experiencing everything together” is enjoyed. And regardless of size, skill or swimming ability, students can safely be right in the middle of it all.

For schools where rafting is not an option, another venue is available called the Hiking Classroom. Within this program, many of the rafting experiences are

transferred to a trail environment. So whether it be hike or paddle, students can discover the world beyond Sidewalk City!

### The Story Behind the Floating Classroom

Garth Pottruff is the founder of the Floating Classroom concept. Having worked for a number of years with the local canoe and kayak outfitter in Paris, Ontario, he was unsatisfied with the available teaching venues. In his experience he found that canoeing students were constantly tipping over because of a lack of skill and, as a result, guides spent more time rescuing than teaching. In addition, the trip mileage was so long that paddling dominated the adventure.

In response, in 2006 Garth created the Grand River Rafting Company. By using rafts he was able to create a teaching environment where every student could go down the river in safety, and also experience paddling. He chose to deliberately shorten the trips and increase the experiences, thus creating the “Floating Classroom.”

*Garth Pottruff is a forester, professional guide and historian. His enthusiasm is contagious and his teaching techniques serve to catch everyone’s attention. Teacher after teacher, from public school to university, has commented on how insightful his learning experiences are. He and his staff of 40 are skilled at making the Grand River Valley come alive!*

*Anyone seeking more information on the Floating Classroom is encouraged to visit the website—[www.grandriverrafting.ca](http://www.grandriverrafting.ca)—check out the blog—“Grand River Rafting Blogs and Legends,” or call 519-442-2519.*



## Students on Ice: A Student's Glowing Warm Report

By Taia Steward

As an international school student I have traveled to more than 40 countries around the world, but nothing impacted me as much as my two-week adventure to the Arctic this past summer. Together with 100 other students and 80 staff members from around the globe, I went to learn about the importance of this unique polar region. Staff members included international educators, elders, scientists, musicians and artists, each tasked with opening students' eyes to this region through the lens of their field of expertise. Students on Ice touts itself as the greatest classroom on Earth, and I couldn't agree more. Each year it embarks on two expeditions, one to each of the two polar regions of the world. A two-week ship-based program, the aim is to teach youth about the importance of these regions. I was lucky to be one of the 100 students selected to join the 2015 Students on Ice Arctic expedition.

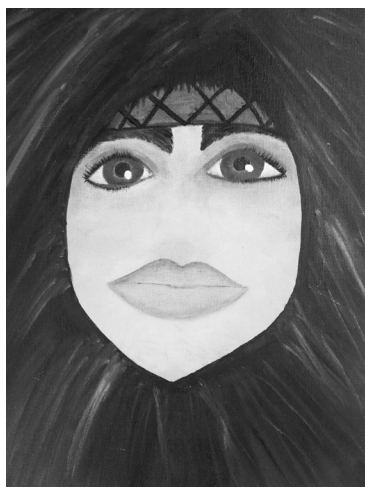
The expedition began in Ottawa, Canada where participants met and got acquainted. We spent two days touring the nation's capital while various staff members peaked our interest with their expertise on the Arctic. Students on Ice is sponsored by the Museum of Nature in Ottawa, so many of our initial activities and meetings were held in their impressive facility.

The third day of our trip was the day we all anticipated. We boarded our flight to Kangerlussuaq, Greenland bright and early. The furthest north I have ever been is Regina, Saskatchewan, so I wasn't really sure what to expect. When we landed, we were greeted by beautiful blue skies. I was surprised that the weather was actually quite pleasant and not too cold. Our first excursion was a short bus tour to see the majestic Greenland icecap. Although the icecap was in the distance, it was still amazing to see the beautiful white ice glistening between the towering green mountains.

Our living quarters for the next two weeks was an ocean liner called *The Ocean Endeavor*. The ship was very big and nothing like I was expecting. It felt like I was on a cruise ship! We spent the next three days in Greenland, visiting Itilleq, Sisimiut, Illulisat and Uummannaq. In Itilleq we had a chance to explore the natural environment and attend one of several workshops led by various staff members. I participated in a workshop led by Assistant Professor of Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences, Daniele Bianchi. We gathered pond water and examined zooplankton and other small creatures. I was fascinated at how these tiny creatures moved.

In Sisimiut, Illulisat and Uummannaq we visited the local communities. The largest of these three was Illulisat, and all the communities were very welcoming and beautiful. The brightly painted houses contrasted the dusty, dirt roads. The people were all very friendly and because the communities were very small it was like they were a giant family. Having lived in Japan for the past seven years, I have experienced how massive cities of millions of people collectively and consciously keep the streets clean and virtually litter free. With very few public garbage cans, people carry their garbage and dispose of it at home. I was somewhat taken aback at how, in comparison, these small northern communities were littered with cigarette butts, plastic and other waste. Eventually this waste makes its way into and damages the ecosystem. This is one personal action I took from my trip. By making an extra effort to keep our environment clean, and helping others to do the same, we can benefit our planet.

One of the most memorable sights for me was Jakobshavn Glacier in Illulisat. During our zodiac trip to shore we weaved in and out of impressive icebergs of all sizes. The closer we got to shore, the more icebergs there were. When we reached the glacier, it was amazing to see ice that looked like it



went on forever. I was shocked to hear from glacial specialists about the alarming rate at which this glacier is disappearing. I learned that, sadly, the glacier loses over a kilometre of ice each month, compared to 100 years ago when it would take a year to lose this amount. We often hear about the effects of climate change, but when I saw firsthand the devastating results of people's actions, it had a huge impact on me.

After taking a full day crossing Davis Strait, we spent the last part of our trip in northern Canada. While here we learned that Canada's national parks were created to protect wildlife and their habitats in their natural regions. We visited Sirmilik National Park, which covers almost all of Bylot Island, and spent time there with a few elders from Pond Inlet. We also visited the community of Pond Inlet where we enjoyed some cultural throat singing, Inuit drum dancing and traditional Inuit games. Members of the community showed us different aspects of their culture including how they make clothes from animal skins and the types of food they eat.

Another interesting site we visited was Beechey Island, a small island almost attached to Devon Island. The island was so barren there was no way you could shelter yourself from the cold winds. Here we visited the graves of three men from the Franklin expedition. The three men were frozen in the ice in 1845 and 1846. We also visited another grave on the island of a sailor who died during of the many attempts to find the Franklin expedition ship.

We saw lots of different wildlife over the two-week trip, including many different whales such as the relatively small minke whale, as well as fin whales, which are the second largest mammals on earth! It was amazing to see them come up every few minutes to breathe, and fun anticipating their misty breaths on the surface of the water. Another wildlife species we saw was polar

bears. The first bear we saw was swimming in the water close to many small icebergs. It was very hard to see because it blended in with the ice. When we saw the bears on land it was surprising how small they looked because the mountains were so huge! As we travelled we also saw various bird species on cliffs, icebergs or flying close to the ship. In addition to lots of large wildlife we also got a chance to see very small wildlife as well. We were able to catch and bring small jellyfish, insects and plankton back to the ship to examine them more closely. It was very cool to see how such small creatures move and live.

I feel so honored and privileged to have been part of this expedition. From this experience my eyes have been opened as I was able to experience firsthand exactly how our actions are impacting our planet. Before the expedition I did not know anything about the rich culture and ecosystems that inhabit the North. On this trip, everything I experienced was so much better and grander than I anticipated. Though people told me this would be a life-changing experience, I never could have imagined just how much that would end up being true.

Whether you are a student or an educator, you, too, can have this experience. To learn more about Students on Ice and how to apply, visit their website: <http://studentsonice.com/> The application process itself is quite simple and straightforward, and there are numerous scholarship opportunities available. I was fortunate enough to receive a scholarship from the Schad Foundation.

*Taia Steward is a Grade 11 student at Tohoku International School in Sendai, Japan. Taia is also a polished figure skater who has competed in Canada, the USA, Europe and Japan. When Taia applied to Students on Ice, she confused some people who thought she was joining a figure skating tour of the Arctic! Along with her Arctic explorations, Taia has also traveled to approximately 40 countries worldwide.*

## Are Students Just Another Brick in the Wall or Are They Structural Puzzle Pieces for Future Environmental Awareness of the Natural World?

By Taylor Kowch

In the summer of 2015 I was lucky enough to land a job in the summer program of an international boarding school in Switzerland. At first I thought, “Hey, not a bad way to work and travel as well as further my career as an educator.” But then it became so much more. Suddenly I was drawn towards the structure of the program and how it incorporated nature, travel and wellness into the educational system of the school.

The school offered morning courses that used the campus classrooms to provide students with a typical course curriculum (math, science, English and so on). Now when I say “typical courses” I don’t mean that in the standard sense. These courses rarely included assignments, evaluations or even standardized testing. Instead, they promoted a type of learning I think all children in Canada should partake in: experiential learning.

Now I must admit, experiential learning is a key factor when teaching mountaineering to a youth group even in Canada, but a core French program? Come on. Students in French never saw a test that told them how well they grasped the concept; instead, they traveled to a nearby town to tour a museum in which they were encouraged to ask questions in French. Instead of being strapped to a desk in a room with four corners and windows that could not open, they traveled the local area in search of connecting students to the material at a deeper level. This deeper connection to learning is something I would argue Canadian students have lost sight of. But it isn’t their fault. Our education system forces students inside and confines them to a curriculum. Yes, we are starting to see course material that incorporates outdoor learning, but it is primarily taught by untrained teachers in local environments through poorly planned lessons. To access



a child’s critical thinking, stimulation of all five senses is required in the core of a lesson plan. Thus the environment becomes an optimal learning environment for such outcomes. Switzerland, and arguably most bordering European countries, have become the front-runners for incorporating local natural environments into their educational systems. In one article, Townsend and Weerasuriya (2010) say that in Zurich, Switzerland there are dedicated schools in forests that have a history of success in outdoor environmental education.

Creating a connection to the natural world can lead to future career opportunities in the field of environmental studies. Jobs in this field will become increasingly more popular worldwide, especially in Canada with the shift in environmental awareness from our newly elected government. One might soon expect to see substantial job growth in this field generated by an economic shift of private and public money from the Alberta oil sands to renewable energy technology including solar and wind power (Ayed, 2015). Part of the issue in getting our students outdoors to learn in nature is their proximity to green spaces. But, this is Canada we are talking about, the second largest country in the world. Canada, if we are talking about population density, could fit four people per square kilometre (United Nations Stats, 2012). The

amount of green space Canada has, even in urban areas, should be accessible by a majority of the general public. Yet we are still seeing a disconnect between society and these natural environments. Townsend and Weerasuriya (2010) say that in Zurich 80 parks and other green spaces such as urban forests in the municipal area total up to 43 per cent of the city's land content. To compare that to the great white north: Canada's urban landscape, which is where nearly 80 percent of our population resides, is estimated to be 19 percent forest-covered (Farr, 2013). Although we cannot generalize to Canadian students in the educational system, it is apparent we do not hold the same values as European nations regarding experiential and nature-based learning. We need to utilize the green space we have in urban areas to encourage a deeper connection to the curriculum of a provincial education system.



As I continue to explore the path of incorporating nature into experiential learning, I encourage Canadian citizens to uphold a standard of education similar to Switzerland's outdoor philosophy. Every

child deserves the right to an education that promotes physical, social and emotional well-being. Although I continue to question my beliefs and challenge the philosophy I carry with me, there is one thing that I find hard to ignore in all of this: the impact our society faces when we alienate our children from the natural world. If we look at the variety of benefits from incorporating nature into our daily lives, it becomes apparent as to where we need to focus our interests: in the educational system. Contrary to the Pink Floyd song, "Another Brick in the Wall" (1979), parents and teachers should not leave their kids alone but instead institute practical outdoor experiential systems that incorporate child development at a cognitive level. All in all, kids are not just another brick in the wall; they are structural pieces to the puzzle of future environmental awareness of the natural world.

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*Taylor Kowch is a fourth year undergraduate student at Laurentian University in the Outdoor Adventure Leadership Program with Concurrent Education. After spending his summer working at an international boarding school in Switzerland, he is excited to start a career in promoting experiential learning for youth in the future.*



## Poetic Inquiry in Outdoor Learning

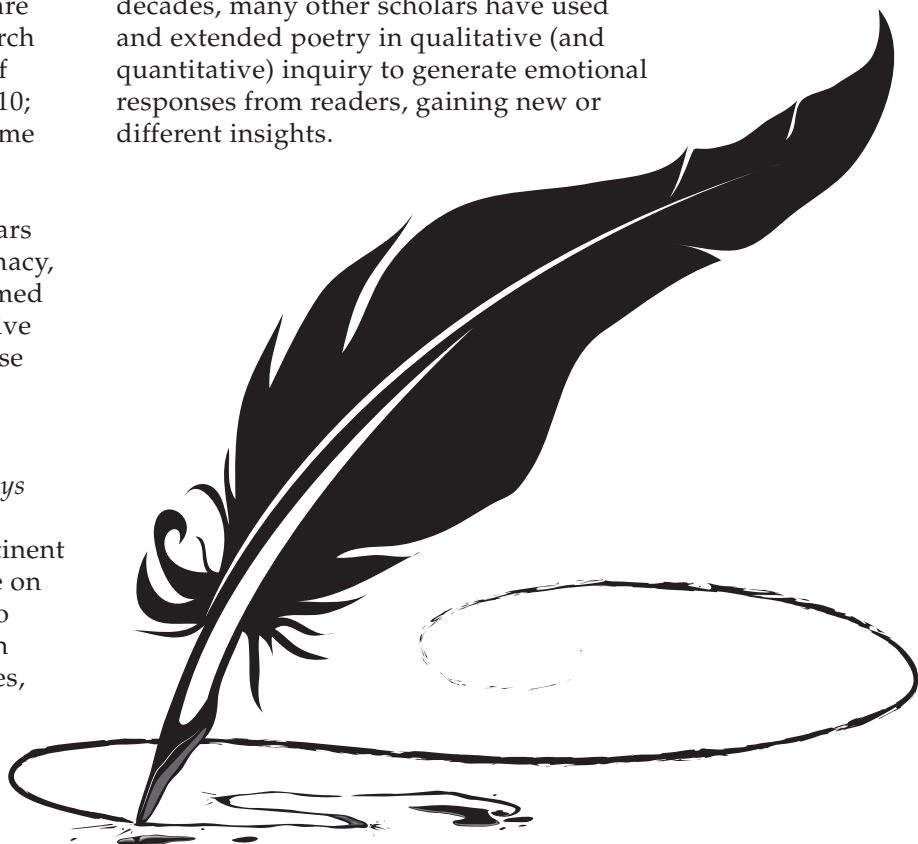
By Mitchell McLarnon

My past contributions to the *Explorations* column have lobbied for artful approaches to inquiry in outdoor learning (OL). I have argued that while some scholars are employing art-based educational research (ABER) methodologies in the context of OL (see Barrett, 2009; Inwood, 2008, 2010; Beames & Pike, 2006; Derby, 2015 as some examples), it is still underused despite its growing acknowledgement among academics in many disciplines. It appears that in OL's search for academic legitimacy, the field (for the most part) has conformed to traditional quantitative and qualitative research paradigms. It is not the purpose of this article to outline the potential hegemonic practices present in OL and its research. It is my hope, though, that through this column, readers of *Pathways* can familiarize themselves with other interesting and useful frameworks pertinent to OL. This issue's foci will concentrate on how poetic inquiry (Prendergast, Leggo & Sashima, 2009) might be employed in OL research, the conceivable advantages, its limitations, and how it might be implemented into qualitative research designs in OL.

### Why Poetry?

Reflecting on my experiences in OL settings, poetry and poetics have been ever present. Think for a moment about how many poems have been written or read on expeditions you have participated in. Now, consider how few studies in OL use poetry to represent data. There seems to be a discrepancy between what is taking place in the field and what is being written in academic texts. According to Butler-Kisber (2010), poetic representations have been employed in qualitative research since the early 1980s. Interestingly, in the social sciences, poetry was first used by sociologist and feminist Laurel Richardson (1992) to represent interview transcripts from her research participant. In negotiating some of the ethical and accuracy issues of her research, Richardson (1992) used

poetic prose in hopes of creating a more evocative and accessible text for her readers (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 83). For the past few decades, many other scholars have used and extended poetry in qualitative (and quantitative) inquiry to generate emotional responses from readers, gaining new or different insights.



### What Is Poetic Inquiry?

Poetic inquiry is a form of qualitative research that integrates poetry as an integral part of a study. The processes involved in writing poetry and living poetically (Leggo, 2007) with and through the inquiry process can help the researcher identify the most relevant themes and phrases out of the data available (Prendergast, Leggo & Sashima, 2009). In poetic inquiry, instead of having participant quotations and qualitative statements, the researcher analyzes her/his data (transcripts, literature review, field notes, autoethnographic reflections, and so on) and then rearranges or reframes the wording to create a poem. In order to represent the data poetically, the researcher engages creatively in the

reforming of data to provide the reader with an empathic rendition associated with the research experiences/phenomena. This approach “takes the words of others and transforms them into poetic form” (Butler-Kisber, 2002, p. 233). If a researcher chooses to use transcripts or other texts to draw inspiration from, this is known as found poetry. Important to found poetry is a sequence where the researcher first establishes a storyline. Then, the researcher might begin “playing with the number of words, the word sequence, line breaks, pauses, breath-points and emphasis to get at the essence of what is being recounted” (Butler-Kisber, 2005, p. 97). Although found poetry allows for the voice of the researcher to be present in her/his understanding, much like in other forms of qualitative research, the content and message of the research participant is emphasized. On occasion, found poems are co-written by researchers and their participants ensuring a collaborative and truthful representation of the data.

*The most compelling benefit of poetic inquiry is that it provides a medium to present complex and abstract data in a playful and accessible way.*

Other forms of poetic inquiry include generative poetry whereby the researcher uses their own words to describe a research situation or event (Butler-Kisber, 2010). These events could be drawn from collaborative research activities or from autobiographical reflections. Similar to found poetry, generative poetry usually follows a sequence that involves reflection, contextualization of the event, and a playful rearranging of the words. (For a more descriptive overview on poetic inquiry, see Butler-Kisber (2010).)

### Benefits of Using Poetic Inquiry in Outdoor Learning Research

The most compelling benefit of poetic inquiry is that it provides a medium to

present complex and abstract data in a playful and accessible way. The implications of this approach mean that potentially inaccessible research can better connect with different audiences. Another benefit of using poetic inquiry within qualitative research is its reflective and reflexive nature. These advantages resonate with the ethos of many OL research projects that promote a subjective process of inquiry in relation to social behavior and relationships. In OL, poetry allows researchers and participants to creatively engage with the world around them. It provides a way to connect what’s with-in, to what’s with-out.

In many OL programs, OL professionals are negotiating tensions amongst their environments, their program/research participants, and themselves. As we are surrounded by poetry (songs, nursery rhymes, chants, sonnets, greeting cards, and so on), in research as in everyday life, poetry has the potential to highlight the richness and complexity of these remarkable interactions. Moreover, poetry can “synthesize experience in a direct and affective way” (Prendergast, Leggo & Sashima, 2009, p. xxxii), helping fill the gaps present in traditional qualitative research. In sum, these artful forms of inquiry disrupt and contest omniscience all too present in academia, permitting for a multiplicity of entanglements that allows us to connect with one another in both cognitive and emotional ways.

### Limitations of Poetic Inquiry

Like all methods and methodologies, poetic inquiry is not designed for all research projects. While there are opportunities for poetic inquiry in qualitative research, it is often and incorrectly understood that poetic inquiry is reserved for poets. This lack of understanding could explain why the methodology is not more widely used in qualitative research and OL. Additionally, not all transcripts, literature and autobiographical reflections are conducive to poetic prose. Another disadvantage to using poetic inquiry is that it might be more time consuming than traditional research

methodologies. Lastly and sadly, the rigour of the research might come into question due to its artistic nature.



## Closing

Given that poetry is ubiquitous in everyday life and OL experiences, poetic inquiry could present a stimulating and playful opportunity within OL research initiatives. As an outdoor environmental educator, I contend that OL as a discipline has a responsibility to educate future generations about environmental stewardship. As such, poetic inquiry could provide an accessible platform for disseminating knowledge to wider audiences.

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## Outdoor Education Prepared Me for My Non-Outdoorsy Job

*By Ian Cockrill*

While the majority of my peers are off on personal adventures, exploring trails and streams, guiding individuals through soul shaping backcountry endeavours, sharing nature with the impressionable and enthusiastic, and enjoying the comforts of natural settings frequently and over long durations, I find myself working a minimum of 66 hours weekly in an indoorsy setting. This is by no means ideal, and if I were to anticipate what my first major job would be upon graduating, I would likely not have considered what it is I am doing now. But that is not to say that what I am doing is not worthwhile.

Although I might not be spending evenings with an open view of the stars, assessing risk in the elements, cooking over a fire, or even assisting others in developing a passion for nature, I would argue that what I do is essentially as much outdoor education (OE) as it can get. Undoubtedly, a passionate and diehard outdoor educator would instinctively disagree but let me explain myself and leave the unbelievers to calm their gut reactions.

With the exception of growing comfortable with wearing company issued polos and dodging foul-mouthed insults (skills I had to develop on my own while on the clock) I would argue that OE has prepared me entirely for my duties as a caregiver at a humble northern Wisconsin group home for adjudicated teenage boys. I find myself on a daily basis incorporating the lessons and skills of my education into my work through the means of active listening, processing and reflection, instructing through experience and teachable moments, using metaphorical teaching strategies, situational leadership, and most importantly compassion. All for the primary purpose of assisting these young individuals to improve upon their personal strengths, develop self-efficacy, understand

and communicate their thoughts and feelings, and shape the independence and courage needed for when the time comes for them to transition back to their home setting.

The adversity that shapes these young individuals might not be brought on by environmental challenges, grueling days of trekking, or developing proficiency with a bow drill, but the indoor challenges they face impact them just the same and the value of these experiences must be conveyed and actualized in the exact manner of reflection and processing as their outdoor counterparts.



One might understandably ask how. Part of the reason is simply granting these impulsive individuals the opportunities and freedom to selectively decide their own course of action through autonomous experiences. This means providing them with experiential opportunities to, as Brown and Fraser explain, “engage in activities which encourage them to make authentic decisions, to exercise individual and collective agency, and to take responsibility for their actions” (as cited in Bobilya, Daniel, Kalisch, & McAvoy, 2014, p. 8). The rest lies within the very methodology that readied an outdoor educator like me for my current job of choice, and that is transferrable knowledge.

A foundational component of outdoor and experiential education alike, transferrable knowledge has a special importance in aiding one in recognizing the value, influence and application of any



experience, be it sufferable, challenging, rewarding or defeating, set in any location, whether indoors or outdoors. In outdoor education, nature serves as a prominent metaphor that sets the stage for learning and exercising skills. The group home setting I've begun to adjust to provides a similar experience-based platform for learning.

However, the setting is not the backcountry, it is one that offers the familiarity of a home and emphatically incorporates many independent living skills that one typically exercises at home. The setting promotes competency, individual growth, interdependence, communication and self-efficacy with the intention of said skills being transferred back to the youths' home environments. Whereas being able to experience empowerment in the backcountry, say through starting a fire with a bow drill, some of these at-risk youths can experience the same empowerment through simply reading the instructions on a box of Hamburger Helper and prepare an entire meal for eight with loose supervision.

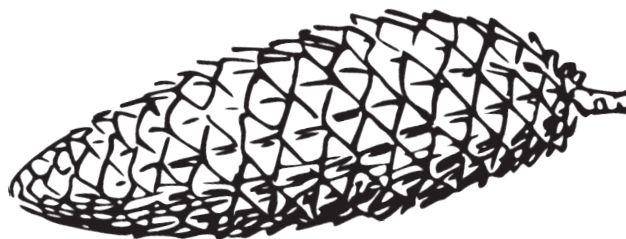
The important similarity is facilitating the process of having the individual recognize the significance of the experience and to reflect upon what they have accomplished, how the lesson(s) of the experience could be later conceptualized/applied, and experimenting with real world usage of the lesson(s).

Such a process, regardless of setting, as the Association for Experiential Education suggests, engages persons "in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities" (as cited in Behrens et al., 2014).

My education trained me to deliver guidance through challenging experiences and I have chosen an environment less conventional than that of my peers. However, I am constantly transferring lessons from my collection of OE

experiences all for the benefit of creating greater ease and significance at my place of work.

The impact of past experiences, mundane or profound, continue to ripple along our lives until they are later recognized and applied. I am reminded of this daily and if I could make a single lesson stick with the boys I work with, it would be that their time at the group home will undoubtedly shape who they become and that they must someday be ready to transfer their experience to future challenges.



Similarly, I know I can count on the rippling drift of my experiences to later on guide and serve me in the future pursuit of facilitating empowering experiences for others and, although it would be ideal, I don't necessarily need an outdoor setting to do so.

## References

- Bobilya, A.J., Daniel, B., Kalisch, K., McAvoy, L. (2014). Autonomous experiences in outdoor and adventure education. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 37(1), p. 4-17.
- Behrens, E., Bettmann, J., Gass, M. A., Gillis, H. L., Norton, C. L., Russell, K. C., & Tucker, A. (2014). Adventure therapy with youth. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 37(1), p. 46-59.

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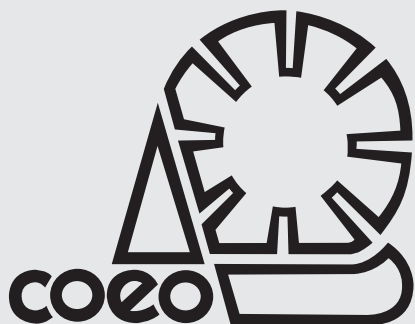
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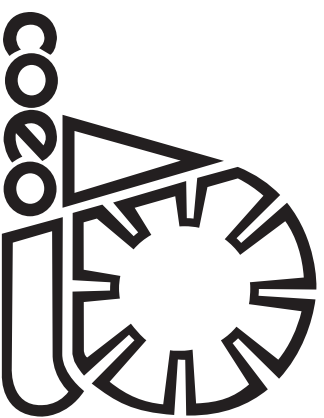
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