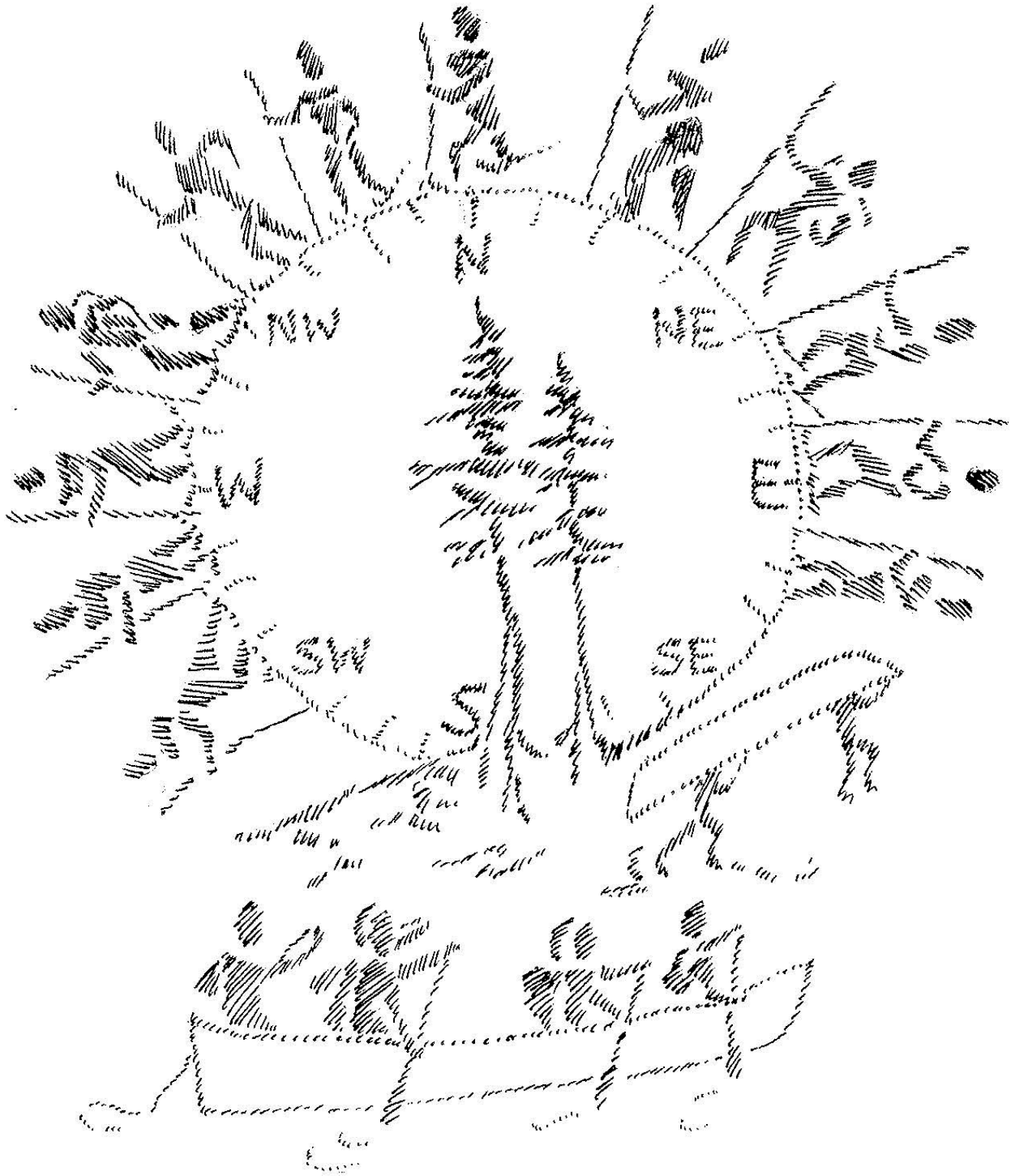


Pathways

THE ONTARIO JOURNAL OF
Spring 2016, 28(3)

OUTDOOR EDUCATION



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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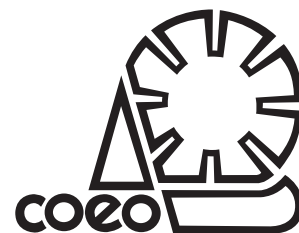
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THE ONTARIO JOURNAL OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION
Spring 2016, 28(3)



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It appears that spring has sprung early in Ontario, and with it comes the spring issue of *Pathways*. Spring is a time of change and renewal, and so it is fitting that this season coincides with some changes here at *Pathways*. I have recently begun my tenure as the Editorial Chair of the journal, having taken over from longtime chair and contributor Bob Henderson. Although this responsibility is a daunting one, it is a role I can already see myself enjoying for many issues to come.

It is a great pleasure to receive contributions for the journal and communicate with both authors and artists. The diversity of material *Pathways* receives is highlighted in this open issue and I believe all readers will find something inspiring to take away from these pages. Readers will most certainly be moved by the actions of retired outdoor educator Frank Glew, known famously in outdoor education (OE) circles for developing the "Instincts for Survival" simulation game and authoring "That Chickadee Feeling." Frank shares the story of what motivated him to write a new book, entitled *Melissa's Magnificent Message*, and then donate hundreds of copies of the book to schools and outdoor education centres throughout the province. Zabe McEachren summarizes findings from a research project she conducted at last summer's Atikokan High School Outers Program 50th reunion celebration. She details the history of this unique program and shares stories about the leaders, participants and community that have contributed to its ongoing success. From the other end of the

province, Ryan Essery reports on an inspiring campus community garden initiative taking place at the University of Windsor, while Gary Pluim and Simon Francis discuss the potential for positioning OE as a stand-alone curriculum area. Melanie Fowler and Tom Potter report on the results of a student project that combined ecofeminism and experiential education, and Chris Peters continues on where his last *Pathways* article left off, in an attempt to more fully infuse *friluftsliv* into his life as a father, teacher and student. Finally, David Hawke reflects on his experience as one of the keynote presenters at last January's Make Peace with Winter gathering and newcomer Laurie Faith shares inspiration from her community of practice and classroom.

Before I sign off I would like to thank Richard E. Winslow, a friend of *Pathways*, for introducing the Editorial Board to Wesley Miller's "A Romantic Replies to Hard-Liner." Miller's essay has been reprinted in this issue with permission from the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA).

Kyle Clarke
Editor



Sketch Pad – The art for this issue of *Pathways* was generously contributed by Natasha Diamondstone-Kohout (pages 3, 5, 13, 18, 27, 30, 33 and 36) and Zabe McEachren (cover and pages 6 and 7.)

Natasha, aged 16, lives in the West River Valley of Southern Vermont with her brother and parents. She loves painting, drawing, making music, dancing, sculpting and any other opportunity for creative expression!

Zabe is the Coordinator of the Outdoor and Experiential Education Program within the Faculty of Education at Queen's University.

During a recent house cleaning purge I came across my journal from 1988, the year I was in grade 8. The major disappointment of my grade 8 year was our teacher's refusal to take our class on the customary Ottawa or Toronto trip due to the unruly behavior of the class the year before. Seeing this as unfair, I took up the cause like any little activist in the making would, but to no avail. A student petition and multiple meetings with teachers and our principal yielded no results. Instead, we went to the Wawanosh Conservation Area. This is a portion of my journal entry from that day:

"We went to Wawanosh today. When we first got there, we went into this barn they had converted into a meeting place for nature freaks like we were supposed to be. For the morning we walked around the park. The highlight was getting up to our knees in mud—stuck in a swamp on the outskirts of a river. It was more fun than I thought it would be."

I laughed out loud to myself as I reread this journal entry from, well, many years ago. "Like the nature freaks we were supposed to be." Ah, if my 13-year-old self could only see me now, I wonder what she would say. I now manage an outdoor education centre not too far away from Wawanosh, and we too have a barn decorated for nature lovers. And I am the COEO President! I did not end up living in

downtown Toronto as I had envisioned when I was 13. I still love getting stuck up to my knees in mud. And I love sharing these experiences with young people.

The truth is, that day at Wawanosh is one of the most memorable of my school career. I still remember the benches we sat on in the barn and the tree cookie name tags. I remember trying out orienteering for the first time, and having to consult with my friends partway through the course because we had somehow ended up back down by the river, and *very* off-course. I remember laughing as we played in that muddy river. I remember the long browning grass. I even recall a little bit about our instructors: two women who were very patient with our grade 8, know-better-than-the-teacher attitudes. I remember very little of the Toronto and Niagara Falls trips I was later able to take in high school. Wawanosh was, indeed, "more fun than I thought it would be." Enough said.

Heading into spring, I salute all of our COEO members who are immersed in syrup producing, and simultaneously planning ahead for the upcoming end of year school trips, canoe tripping season, and all other manner of outdoor adventures with students. I wanted to share this story, because I know approaching the end of the school year means we are a bit tuckered out and looking forward to our own summer adventures. But we dig deep, because we know what outdoor education can mean for our students. I never dreamed at age 13 that I would end up one day working at a place like Wawanosh...and loving it. Yet that trip was the very fortunate foundation for my career trajectory, as well as many more personal outdoor adventures. Outdoor educators foster outdoor skill development, a comfort level in the outdoors, nature appreciation and leadership. But we also introduce students to new parts of themselves...and you never know where that may lead.

Nature freaks everywhere, I salute you!

Deborah Diebel
COEO President



Outers: The Roots of Public Outdoor Education in Canada

By Zabe MacEachren

Upon entering the front doors of the Atikokan high school a visitor will see 50 oval wooden cookies, each one carefully incised with the names of participants for a specific year of the Outers Program. This entranceway highlights Ontario's and Canada's longest-running outdoor education program at a public high school. In late June 2015, a week of activities was planned as part of the 50th reunion event. To understand what led to this program's decades of success, I arranged to attend and collect interviews from alumni and former directors. I had first heard about this program in the early 1980s from my Lakehead University Outdoor Recreation professor, Jim Smither. He had been an earlier Outers' director. In the 1990s, I taught at a nearby school and would occasionally hear about the Outers continued existence. When I began my work at Queens University, I made a point of asking to meet the first Associate Dean of Education. I had heard he was the person responsible for the Outdoor and Experiential Education program I coordinated. During this meeting I discovered that Bill Peruniak as principal in Atikokan had also founded the Outers program. I was intrigued to learn about how a high school outdoor program could survive for 50 years and influence two universities in the establishment of their outdoor programs.

In the early 1960s Bill was the principal of the Atikokan high school and was seeking a way to keep youth engaged in school. Many community members were concerned about the rate of youth dropping out of school and getting a readily available job in the mines or logging industry. Bill sent a few of his teachers to scout out alternative programs across the country. After a discussion they settled on Minnesota's Outward Bound as most interesting. Bill then arranged for more of his teachers to visit this location

and learn about their philosophy and practices.

Bill was a prodigy in his time. He held many strong convictions that still can be felt in the program to this day. For instance, he developed his own teaching maxims; these are posted in large font on a wall in the Outers building. The impact of these maxims is very evident, as numerous alumni, former directors and present day Outers all recited them to me during my visit (and specifically #6).

Bill was insistent that leadership be shared. He refused to be the first director, instead persuading Jim Smither to fill the position. (After leaving Atikokan, Jim established Kingfisher Outdoor Education Center in Thunder Bay and was one of the founding professors in Lakehead University's Outdoor Recreation program.) First year Outers and early teachers clearly recall the inspirational and motivating speech Bill gave that very first year, imploring students to get involved with Outers. Many features of the Outers program have contributed to its lasting success. What follows is a brief synopsis of those features, many of which are unique within Southern Ontario.

Teaching Support

Each year had one Outers Director, but the program as a whole was supported by the volunteer hours of many teachers. Teachers not directly helping with a field outing were expected to help in another manner, such as assisting students in preparing food or covering classes for teachers aiding the multi-week canoe trip in June. In the first year of the program, the woodworking teacher, Mr. Briggs helped mill the wood from some land behind the school. He then taught students how to make canoe forms, to shape 22-foot canoes out of cedar, and to create 10-feet by 10-feet challenge

course climbing nets (Livickeri, Ojala, & Halasz, 2005). Many technology teachers played a pivotal role in aiding Outers with their equipment, yet never participated in outings. One of the teachers who helped out on this year's canoe trip told me that, during her job interview for the board, she was asked if she liked canoeing and would be willing to help with the Outers program. Despite never having done a canoe trip before, she said "yes." She got the job and has continued to get involved and help on the trips every year, except when she had young children at home.

Community Support

Atikokan's population has shifted as resource-based industries have come and gone, yet signs of community support for the Outers has never wavered and is noticeable everywhere. The local donut shop had a large "Welcome Outers" window mural and the local grocery store had posted a large map of each of the Outers canoe routes. The local newspaper has avidly covered Outers events for all 50 years. Any articles about a local person going abroad to do something, like military service, prints the person's name followed by "(Outers, year)" as if purposely listing their credential in community membership.

When the Atikokan School was told they were to amalgamate with the Rainy River District School Board, hundreds came

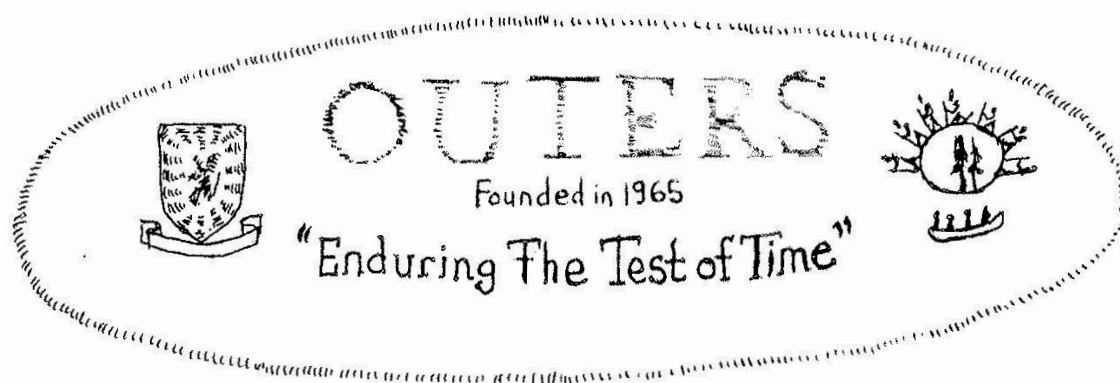
out to the local meeting and insisted that the amalgamation would only happen if the Outers program was retained as is. After the reunion event when I was in Fort Frances, a two-hour drive away, I was approached on the street by the board's superintendent. He explained I had been pointed out to him as a researcher from Queen's covering the Outers' Alumni event. He wanted to make sure I was aware that the board was in the midst of establishing outdoor programs at other board high schools as they recognized the success of Outers. By far the largest visual image of community support was experienced at the landing. Hundreds of people, many alumni from afar, came out to see the canoes paddled in. I met many people who had no family member participating that year, but who just liked to come to see the Outers arrive, because it was tradition.

Program Flexibility

There were many interesting stories concerning how the program, through the guidance of its directors, had embraced change over the years. One interesting adaptation came the first year when Bill was not allowed to change the date of the provincial exams and it conflicted with a canoe trip. His solution was to arrange for the exams to be flown in to a specific lake midway through the trip. He then supervised students scattered along the shoreline as they completed their exams. The next year Bill discovered that, as principal, he had the capability to exclude students from writing exams for various reasons. From then on joining Outers meant you were excluded from writing spring exams.

The Outers' first winter had unprecedented amounts of slush on the local lakes that served to hinder snowshoeing activities. Bill, who was a history major, may have been aware of packateers' travelling techniques. He suggested that an all-night snowshoe trek be created, allowing the colder night temperature to freeze and reduce concerns about encountering





slush. Bill's love of history may also have influenced the use of large North-style canoes, 20 to 22 feet long, instead of the standard 16- to 18-foot craft students would have used at Outward Bound. Many directors shared that larger canoes necessitated better group cooperation both when paddling and portaging.

Other program changes resulted when early directors critiqued why they were copying some of Outward Bound activities. Activities like rock climbing, the wall and other "contrived" obstacle course challenges were quickly abandoned and replaced by activities based upon practical canoeing and navigational skills. When prime canoe tripping country exists in your backyard, as Quetico Park does to Atikokan, there is no need to create artificial initiatives and activities to develop character in youth. Outers' emphasis on canoeing and snowshoeing activities demonstrates a Canadian place-based alternative to the many "build anywhere"-type challenge course initiatives that abound today.

For decades Outers existed as a club, with activities done mostly on the weekends, one exception being the multi-week June canoe trip. Once the Ontario Ministry of Education offered the outdoor physical education credit, this was offered to all Outers and directors received acknowledgement of their work with one credit in their teaching load. This has helped, but would never match the long additional overtime hours spend directing the program.

Gendered Groups and Outers Roles

A unique feature of Outers is the way gendered groups and designated roles in a brigade are chosen in September and maintained all year. If you sign up for the role of leader, equipment person, food coordinator or navigator, you maintain that role within your same brigade for the duration of the year. When I asked volunteer teachers and former directors about the designated gender brigades the usual response was "it works." One teacher, who had been involved for over a decade, explained that each gender goes about it differently but gets to the same place in the end (referring to group cohesiveness and personal development). No one I talked to would have preferred mixed groups.

Solos Experience

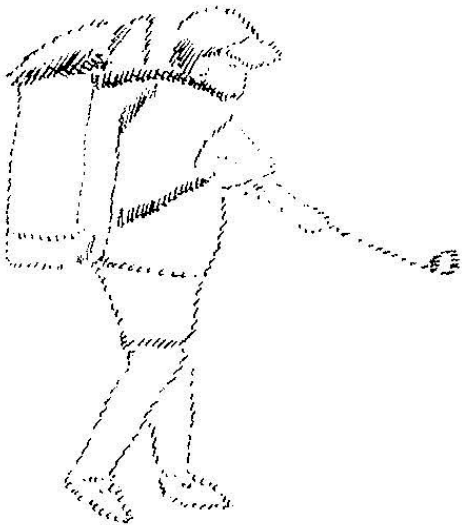
Since its inception Outers had maintained a three-day solo experience on its final canoe trip. During the first decade each student was provided with a large metal can that held matches, bouillon cubes, fish hooks, rope and a large sheet of plastic with which to make a shelter. With these minimal supplies and a sleeping bag, students would be dropped off along the shoreline and expected to avoid contact with other Outers. In recent years the solo supplies would come to include letters from family members and friends that could be read during the solitude. Many alumni banquet speakers addressed the importance of their solo experience and shared a few humorous stories about how they "broke the rules."

The many memories shared, of either

the difficulties of group tripping over challenging terrain or being alone in nature with time to reflect, can be pivotal in a teenager's development. The general mentality shared by alumni was that the experience was hard, but they were glad that they had done it, and they were a better person as a result. These reflections seemed apt descriptions for what I witnessed at the landing when so many students raced out of their canoes to throw their arms around their parents and waiting friends. I had to wonder what meaningful things were shared in the solo letters that might have never been shared if the solo experience had not been maintained as part of the overall Outers experience.

Safety

All the directors shared their difficulty in finding a way to deal with the mounting concerns and administrative protocol required to run a program like Outers. During the early years a few close calls kept safety in the forefront of their minds. "To succeed is to return safely" (p. 14) became a caption appearing in early Outers' reports. Directors realized that good equipment was essential and, as a result, efforts were made to purchase better lifejackets and other things when they came on the market. The homemade wood and canvas canoes became heavier with each coat of paint added so were eventually replaced with



purchased lighter fiberglass and then plastic canoes. Today the brigades venture out with modern day satellite phones and all appropriate safety equipment.

Over the years directors and staff have made the point of leaving town to attend aquatic rescue and canoe certification courses run elsewhere in the province. Professional outdoor educators know this is a huge commitment and frequently comes at added personal expense, especially in the north. The teachers involved with Outers are dedicated to ensuring its survival and following all the necessary protocol required. "I would do it again in a heartbeat, if I was able" was the one of the responses I received from a participant in the first year of the program and served to explain why so many teachers and directors ensured that the program found a way to continue through years of administrative waves of support.

Space Needs

For the 40th reunion a facility initiative was organized to begin properly storing the equipment acquired over four decades of running Outers; keeping it in the school basement was becoming problematic. Students raised a significant amount of the funds required and once again the shop classes and tech teachers volunteered hundreds of hours of their time to create the impressive facility that now exists. It is a large separate building at the back of the school. A large garage door lifts to allow equipment to be easily moved in and out. The interior is multi-roomed with various murals reflecting the Outers pride and past canoe routes explored.

Funding Support

At the 50th reunion, the fundraising spirit that has always been a part of Outers and small town Atikokan was displayed yet again. The annual golf tournament was organized with participants teeing off while wearing snowshoes, swinging their clubs with canoe packs on their back and having to direct their putts through miniature solo tarp structures. This event was followed by

a banquet in the curling club that saw more than 1,000 people attend. Many were alumni, including seven families that had three generations of Outers present. This event was an amazing example of support for a public school outdoor program.

Conclusion

According to the teachers involved in maintaining Outers over the decades, “it has all been worthwhile.” Outers is like a legend in this small town that calls itself the canoe capital of Canada. It is an exemplar of outdoor education that should be known across the province and Canada. Imagine 50 years of extended spring canoe trips with high school students, all-night snowshoeing events, three-day solos as a young teenager. In true Canadian fashion, Outers took shape in a small town residing in the Canadian wilderness. Its alumni stories model a way outdoor education has survived and thrived in a public school.

Congratulations on 50 years of outdoor education in Canada, Atikokan!

Way to go Outers!

Bill Peruniak’s Maxims for Instructors of Outers

1. At all cost, avoid the role of teacher.
2. Yet, always, do play the role of safety officer.
3. Never lecture: demonstrate instead, and even then, only when necessary.
4. The less said the better—their experience is more eloquent than our words.
5. Problem-grappling is more beneficial than mastering professional skills.
6. A third-rate original solution is worth more than a first rate hand-me-down.
7. The name of the game is not proficiency, but spontaneity.
8. The big boss is the impersonal situation—not the instructor.
9. The instructor impels the youngsters towards greater fortitude through encouragement, support, commendation and personal example.

10. Stay interested and alert, but detached from the group.
11. Do get close to individuals: a complement a day keeps defeatism away.
12. Be yourself—at your best.
13. Enjoy the outing—a smile always helps
14. Reserve criticism only for dangerous acts—otherwise be a gentle counselor and never a task-master.
15. A counselor cannot be “chummy.”
16. Whenever possible, let the group do the assessing of its own performance.
17. We have to ensure that each student is successful. Start with the premise that in this course, no one fails who tries.
18. Since the tolerance level varies with individuals, special allowances may have to be made in some cases.



References

Livicker, D., Ojala, E., & Halasz, N. (2005). *Outers 40th reunion*. Canada.

Zabe MacEachren wishes she had been raised in Atikokan so she could have attended Outers. She is very grateful to both Jim Smither and Bill Peruniak for sharing their stories and inspiring her in ways to envision working at a university in the field of outdoor education. She is grateful to all the Outers alumni and past directors for sharing so many wonderful tales and congratulates them for having been awarded a Queen’s University SEED research grant. Zabe can be reached at maceache@queensu.ca

A Romantic Replies to a Hard-Liner

By Wesley Miller

The question of whether instruction should centre primarily on the content of the disciplines or on the experience of the learner is pertinent to environmental education just as it is to other fields of knowledge. In the letter that follows, a college teacher takes a position strongly differing with a colleague. The letter is authentic; the name of the recipient has been changed to ensure anonymity.

I've been thinking about your comment on field trips. It went something like this, I believe.

"Our program stresses content. We've got too many teachers who are know-nothings. You should hear some of the misinformation they give out. It's terrible and it isn't necessary. For example, I heard one say the moon was not a satellite. On our Florida trips to the Everglades we hit the disciplines. We have a geologist, an oceanographer and an anthropologist. We deal in math and chemistry, and we give the teachers a solid test in each of the disciplines. We work seven days a week. When they come back they know something. How can you teach something if you don't know it? I don't want people just playing around. My problem is to get people to stick with content. The rest is nonsense."

When you said all this, I sat mute. I felt intimidated. What you were saying seemed so strong, so morally right. How could anyone speak out against "real learning"? Still, in my mind I knew I had something to say. Now in the quiet of my room perhaps I can express what I then lacked the facility to utter.

Sorry, George, but I simply don't agree with your point of view. Not that what you are doing isn't all right. It's just that I see it as limited. It takes too shallow a view of human life, of learning, of what is knowledge.

I do not disagree with the value of

knowing content. Learning the content of the various disciplines can be useful, and it can be a satisfying experience to acquire the knowledge. I happen to have learned quite a lot about the solar system. I know a lot of facts, and I can talk at considerable length about the planets. This is satisfying to me, and it is instructive to my students.

But that is not all there is to know of the planets. Here is something else to know. Two years ago I sat at dusk on a bluff in California and watched the sun as it slipped below the Pacific horizon. It was a glorious, shimmering, round, red disk. Or at least it started as a disk. When the sun gets close to the horizon it becomes flattened and then takes on the appearance of a series of bands. One by one these bands settle below the rim of the Earth until a tiny flash of light signals the end of another day—the end of another day of my life.

That night, Venus was bright in the sky, so I stayed there on the bluff, waiting the hour or so for it to set. While I sat there I wondered, will Venus too, turn red as it approaches the horizon? The sun had turned so spectacularly red, and Venus seemed so brilliant, I couldn't help but wonder, would Venus turn red, too? What do you think? Do you think Venus ever turns red when it sets? Perhaps the answer to that is in a book, and I could learn it without observing it; but I've never read it, and that night I found the answer. It is yes. I was genuinely pleased watching it happen.

Small event perhaps, but a magic hour for me. One I have not forgotten. And isn't this one of the meanings of life, to find such magic hours?

George, I want my students to find such magic hours. You said a teacher cannot teach what he does not know. I say there are things a teacher knows that he cannot teach. I cannot teach a student how to

come to love the setting of the sun, to find joy in the smell of spring, to know reverence in the hush of newly fallen snow. There are no words to teach such things. But what I can do is to tell my students that such joys do exist, and in the field I can set up situations in the hope that they, too, will come to the knowledge it has been my privilege to enjoy. God knows, in a city altogether too few people know these pleasures.

I hasten to add that knowing the content of the related disciplines can greatly add to one's enjoyment of these events. Knowing what I do about Venus—even just knowing that it was Venus—made possible that Pacific experience. That is why content is important; that is why *my* students learn it.

You say your students work seven days a week on their field trips. Seven days a week learning content? Is there no time to feel the spray? No time to walk in the sun? No time to be alone? No time to reflect? No sweat slumber? I say, take time to smell the roses.

What I have been describing is the aesthetics of the out-of-doors. But what is really at issue goes much deeper than that. I am really talking about a philosophy of education—what it ought to be. The point of view I represent is based on two hypotheses: (1) that the impact of environmental education comes from the total experience of the learners, and (2) that people are different, therefore, what they learn is different.

Let's take the first: the total experience of the learner. You say a person cannot teach what he does not know. I disagree. When my students are experiencing me—whether I am lecturing in a classroom, drinking coffee or hiking down a trail—they are learning all sorts of things from me that I am not consciously trying to teach. Some of these things I do not know myself. This is what John Dewey called the collateral curriculum. And I believe (and I believe this on the basis of my personal experience) that much of this is

very important. For I am a model for them, and the kind of person I am influences the kind person they are to become. Perhaps oftentimes I am a negative model, but that is all right—we learn from negative models, too.

Then there are the personal relationships. One of the beauties of environmental education is that it gives people a chance to come to know one another outside the classroom. These relationships are terribly important in understanding other human beings—and our personal selves through other people. The sharing of the campfire, the rest after the long hike, the breakfast table banter, all these things help us to come to know closeness and the diversity of the human family. These learnings are vital, and I, the teacher, tend to them when planning the curriculum.

And what of the personal learnings about one's self? Today social critics are deploring modern man's [sic] estrangement from his own body. Rightly so, I think. But when I hike a group of teachers over a mountain path or canoe them across a lake or sleep them on the ground or climb them up a fire tower, I am contributing to their knowledge of themselves. For some it is not happy learning; for others it is enervating; for all it is important.

I am most interested in those learnings that truly make a personal difference in the lives of my students. I want my students to come away from any course I teach feeling that their experiences with me made a significant difference to them, that they are better persons in some important way because of our association. And I have come to believe that very little of what I teach directly ever accomplishes this. Certainly very little content. What counts comes from our human interactions. It comes from the touching of my self to their selves.

I suppose this sounds grandiose, and I agree. I'm sure it doesn't happen very often that I touch a student

deeply, personally. But it does happen occasionally, I think, because it does happen that occasionally a student touches my life in such a way that it significantly influences me.

Let me speak of attitudes. I want my students to come away from their experience in environmental education feeling that they want to continue to know—must continue to know—the out-of-doors as an integral part of their personal lives for the remainder of their days. I want them hiking for the joy of it on Sunday afternoons. I want them seeking out the call of the loon because I said it was unforgettable, and they know from the other things we did that this must be so. I want them to watch wild creatures because there are things to be learned from them. In short, I want them to come to love the Earth; then perhaps they will become active in the fight to protect it from the depredations of man [sic].

Finally, there is a moral component. My relationship with the Earth is a moral one. There is no escaping this once I become conscious of it. I am responsible for my acts, both of commission and of omission. So are my students, though too few are likely to be aware of it when they first come into my class. When they leave, I hope they will have gained a sense of the moral responsibility they bear in improving the quality of life on this planet. If I can succeed in this, perhaps they can pass this consciousness on to their students who will in turn pass it on to others in an ever-widening circle.

Now for my second hypothesis: that people are different, therefore what they learn is different. On field trips let me stand on the shoreline while your chemist mystifies me with his symbols. You will say I am not paying attention. You will be wrong. I will be attending to the flight of the gull, to the slash of the wave, to the roaming of the clouds, to the incredible magnificence of this place. I will want to run and splash and twist and whirl. I will not, of course, for I will be learning

something from your chemist (not all of it is lost except to the most far-out of students). But he will not be touching me in the place where I can most deeply respond. There will be others he will not truly touch either: the artists, the poets, the lovers. Some students will, of course, be wholly with him, those who love chemistry. And are they the better persons among us therefore? I think not. Different, to be sure, but hardly better.

But are the listeners to the chemist learning and the nonlisteners not learning? No. The chemistry lovers are learning more, of course, for they are being instructed in what they love. The others are learning a bit of chemistry too, but mostly they are learning whatever lures them to divert their attention—whether it is scenery, the person brushing up against as it is with that youthful, hot-blooded couple, or what is going on in his own head as it is with Albert, the thinker. What we learn depends upon what kind of souls we be. Each of us selects from the vast range of possibilities inherent in any environment those things that are most true to the essence of our individual selves. This is called learning. It is idiosyncratic. It cannot much be forced out of joint. And this is why I say: Let us have geologists, and anthropologists, and artists, and poets, and preachers, and thinkers, and singers, and laughers, and lovers, and jocks, and dancers, and mathematicians, too. And let us celebrate our diversity, for I have much to learn from you and you from me. We will learn most if we allow it all to be.

This article was reprinted with permission from the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) and appeared in The Science Teacher, Vol. 40, No. 8, November 1973. At the time of its original publication, Dr. Wesley Miller was a professor of science education at Queen's College of the City University of New York.

The Campus Community Garden

By Ryan Essery

Some of my most vivid childhood memories of wonder and joy derived from dirt, quite literally. My mother was an avid gardener and I can remember spending many beautiful spring and summer days in the garden. After a few years of helping, I was ready for my own garden. To this day I can still recall the immense pride and satisfaction that came with gardening. I remember in elementary school being part of the construction of an outdoor garden where I helped unroll sod and plant flowers, bushes and shrubs. These memories and experiences fostered a connection to nature and helped shape my personal values for the environment. Through the later years of my education I found myself becoming more disconnected from nature as I balanced work and school. As a university student, renting an apartment, and without the resources or space for my own garden, I grew a fascination with the philosophy of community gardens.

Community gardens have been positively influencing individuals, communities and the environment for centuries. Historically, community gardens have been used as a means to bring nature to urban communities and serve individuals and families of lower socioeconomic status (Selhub & Logan, 2012). These community gardens can impact local communities by providing access to healthy produce, offering opportunities to be physically active, supporting mental health and well-being, creating opportunities for social interaction and cohesion, teaching about local ecology, and enhancing sustainability (Selhub & Logan, 2012). As a student at the University of Windsor I would pass by the Campus Community Garden (CCG) almost every day on my way to class. Feeling intrigued, it wasn't long until I decided to get involved.

The Campus Community Garden

The CCG at the University of Windsor has been a thriving community garden

in the Windsor area since its inception in 2010. The founder, Dr. Rita Haase, is a passionate environmentalist and educator. With a doctoral degree in Ecology/Botany, a master's degree in Science Education, and a profound knowledge of feminist and environmental theory, Rita was able to combine her political activism with her passion for education to help form the CCG. To the common person or student passing by the CCG, it would seem like any other community garden. However, being uniquely located on the university campus, the CCG is doing more than simply building a healthy, interactive urban community through the collective production of locally grown, organic food. The CCG has a community within the garden, provides authentic teaching and learning experiences for faculty and students by creating a university community, and supports and engages a wider community by bridging the gap between the university and the local community.

The Community within the Garden
The CCG utilizes an ecological approach to gardening known as permaculture. Permaculture practitioners take into consideration the interconnection and relationship between organisms, buildings, landscapes and other factors. Hemenway (2009) writes, "Permaculture is not a discipline in itself but rather a design approach based on connecting different disciplines, strategies, and techniques" (p. 5). He goes on to suggest the approach is "guided by a set of ethics: caring for Earth, caring for people, and reinvesting the surplus that this care will create" (p. 6). As Hemenway (2009) believes, permaculture aims to design a garden that is ecologically sound and economically prosperous.

Having been designed with permaculture in mind, the CCG is more than a set of raised beds for community members to use. Indeed, this garden boasts a large central keyhole garden, an herb spiral, a

large native wild flower garden, and many other natural patterns. With various faculty members serving as local experts in botany, ecology, biodiversity and permaculture, and all contributing to the overall design of the garden, it is little surprise that the CCG has flourished into being the magnificent garden it is today. By pairing plants and wild flowers to work in harmony, the CCG has been structured to act as its own community. With a focus on sustainability the CCG annually cycles crops through a system of raised beds, periodically uses cover crops for fertility, and catches and conserves rainwater. Everything has been carefully considered. As a result, the CCG has become an ecologically sound and economically prosperous community.

Building a University Community

The CCG at the University of Windsor has created a community within an often compartmentalized organization, bringing faculty and students from different departments together for a common goal. The CCG also provides unique teaching and learning opportunities for both faculty and students. The CCG management team comprises faculty, librarians, and graduate and undergraduate students, both

domestic and international, with a variety of backgrounds and experiences. Each member of the CCG and management team contributes something unique. The CCG has truly established a university community by breaking down the barriers of traditionally catalogued and segregated academia. The CCG communal work days and general meetings have taken on a potluck style of food sharing that has encouraged community building and socialization. Faculty and students from the faculties of Education, Social Work, Human Kinetics, Environmental Studies, Biology and Chemistry, to name a few, each bring their own expertise and special interest.

The potential uses of the CCG are countless. Groups have used the CCG as an outdoor classroom for experiential learning as well as a space to conduct lessons and facilitate learning. Groups have used the CCG for its therapeutic benefits, for relaxation, and as a place to escape from the hustle and bustle of urban life. On a nice day you can often see faculty and students enjoying their lunch or sitting on a bench appreciating nature. The CCG has been the focus of many course projects, used for service learning, used for volunteer experience



and internships, and as the topic of research studies and dissertations. Business students have looked into sustainability models for the CCG, Human Kinetics students have studied the nutritional value of food produced at the CCG, and university clubs have collaborated with the CCG to advocate for environmental issues. International students learn about native species and share their experience and culture through gardening. Even the university's Delta Kia fraternity has visited and used the garden throughout the years. The CCG has fortified itself as a university community, bringing students and faculty together, and has served as a platform for teaching and learning opportunities.

Connecting Universities to Local Communities

The mission of the CCG is to promote positive interaction between the university campus and the local community. The CCG was developed as an effort to support sustainability on the University campus and the local community. Community gardens have been seen as the pathway to individual, community and environmental resilience (Selhub & Logam, 2012). The CCG supports and encourages community building and beautification, garden-based education, and urban agriculture as a means to improve food security in Windsor, while also fostering a sense of environmental stewardship. The CCG has hosted community-based educational workshops on various gardening philosophies and techniques, food preparation through dehydration and canning methods, composting and basic gardening skills. Additionally, the CCG contributes to the community by supplying food for people in need as well as engaging, educating and empowering people to grow their own food. The CCG even has its own YouTube account where they post educational videos. Local elementary and secondary schools visit the CCG for experiential learning opportunities, for school- and class-managed garden plots, and to help lend a hand on work days. Furthermore,

the United Way and the CCG organize an annual *Change the World* event where students learn about community building, sustainability and civic responsibility.

The CCG also engages many local community groups through networking and social media. Over the years the CCG has welcomed groups and organizations that service immigrants and newcomers to Canada, people of lower socioeconomic status, at-risk youth, seniors, the First Nations' community, and many others. CCG members are encouraged to donate a portion of their harvest, which in turn gets passed on to local missions and food banks. With efforts like this, the CCG continues to bridge the gap between the university and the local community.

As a member and current manager of the CCG, I have been humbled and inspired to share the work the CCG is doing. It is my hope that universities consider developing their own campus community garden. Campus community gardens have the potential to build university communities and connect universities to broader local communities. With an ecological approach in their design, these gardens can shape our universities and communities for generations to come.

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Experiential Ecofeminism Programming

By Melanie Fowler and Tom Potter

Ecofeminism philosophy is grounded in the idea that women and nature are each oppressed by the same dominant, patriarchal social systems. Ecofeminists believe that environmental and social justice issues are interconnected and attempt to use feminist ideals, such as compassion and equality, to resolve them (Alcid, 2013). Due to shared experiences, it is believed that women are in a favourable position to speak for nature and spearhead social and environmental justice movements (Chircop, 2008).

For my undergraduate honours project I1 designed and implemented a small research study. The purpose of my study was to create an effective, empowering and experiential ecofeminist introductory program for young women. Feminist philosophies advocate for experiential education by contending that people learn best about nature in nature (The Green Fuse, n.d.). Therefore, this study aimed to learn if experiential ecofeminist programming could be beneficial to young women in regards to their attitudes towards society, the environment and themselves. More specifically, the study investigated if and how young outdoor-oriented women relate to ecofeminist philosophies, and if and how education on ecofeminism could change their perspectives of themselves and of their position in their social and environmental communities.

Literature Review

Ecofeminism was conceptualized in the 1970s as a way to understand the shared experiences of social and environmental injustices (Buckingham, 2004). Historically, men's identity has been based on a distinction from both women and nature, which has served to maintain the oppression of both. Women and nature are connected both theoretically and symbolically (Chircop, 2008). They are both seen as nurturing, life-giving and cyclical,

due to the changing of the seasons and women's reproductive cycle (The Green Fuse, n.d.). Thus females are given the same "marked bodies" by society as are animals and nature, meaning they are for the use of others. The goals of ecofeminism are to deconstruct patriarchy, heal the separation created by dualisms, and combat social and environmental injustices in an integrated and team-oriented way (Buckingham, 2004).

Understanding the connection between the oppression of women, minorities and the environment is vital to having a feminist understanding of justice-related issues. The largest connection is that the oppression is systematic, meaning that it is built into the structure of the society that then reinforces it. The systematic disregard for the value of these groups is a factor in the lack of progress that has been made on issues like HIV/AIDS, globalization and climate change (Buckingham, 2004). Environmental racism describes how racism leads to minority ethnicities living in less environmentally healthy areas such as near hazardous landfills or inner-city housing, and how Aboriginal peoples have been alienated from their lands, compromising their health as a people (Chircop, 2008). Clearly, pollution is harmful to both the environment and humans. However, some may not know that women's bodies are particularly vulnerable to environmental pollutants, while tolerance to such pollutants is most often tested using males. Ecofeminist programming could help make people more aware and inspire reconsideration of malpractices.

Ecofeminism is beneficial to nature as it inspires respect and encourages symbiosis between humans and non-humans. An ecofeminist perspective benefits women in terms of their connection to other women, connection to nature and empowerment. Connecting with others is useful in validating women's everyday experiences with nature and within a patriarchal

society (Barrie, Pohl, & Patterson, 2000). In nature, women are free from socially imposed limitations, consumerism, politics and judgments (Barrie et al., 2000). Coming to be integrated with their environment can show women that they are perfect in their imperfections, just as nature is (Copland, 1994). Everyday acts of connection and care, which make people more focused and aware, can include gardening, composting, tree planting, or keeping honey bees. In ecofeminism there is a focus on equality and ability that increases self-confidence and self-worth. The empowerment in being heard and the ability to create real change is one of the biggest benefits of ecofeminism (Barrie et al., 2000).

Alternate types of education, such as experiential education, exist in ecofeminist movements. This is because ecofeminists believe that we learn about, and connect with nature by experiencing it (Chircop, 2008). Workshops can provide the experience and ecological literacy needed to express a holistic ecofeminist strategy, as well as combat isolation by providing a supportive community. Involved learning helps people to relate more positively towards what they are being taught, and gives them a sense of how to use this knowledge (Alcid, 2013). Because of these intriguing elements, I believe that ecofeminist education can help individuals understand their place within ecosystems, and create a more just society.

Despite the clear benefits, most ecofeminist education available in North America is composed of university courses, which are inaccessible to most and very few have experiential components. To be effective, I believe ecofeminism needs to be accessible, understandable and applicable to the common person. I hypothesized that more available ecofeminist workshops could improve young women's perception of themselves and their place in the bigger ecological picture, as well as increase their awareness of the interconnection of current issues.

Methods

Qualitative methods were used in this study to validate experiences and gain personal understanding of perspectives. Participants were selected through convenience sampling where women enrolled in an outdoor-oriented university program were notified of the opportunity to participate through e-mail and social media posts. The four participants who volunteered were between the ages of 18 and 25.

A pre and post-treatment interview was conducted with each participant. The treatment consisted of a full-day ecofeminism educational program delivered in October 2015. This program incorporated both traditional seminar and experiential opportunities.

The seminar included an explanation of ecofeminism, discussion of interconnectedness, brainstorming, sharing of experiences and creative activities. The experiential component took place outside and included activities such as an edible plant walk, free-fall writing, guided meditation and seed planting.

The interviews were analyzed using ongoing analysis and grounded theory. During the analyses I continually compared and contrasted information from both sets of interviews and watched for emerging themes in the details and connections. Grounded theory is an extension of this where I used categories to determine similarities and differences in themes to create the proceeding integrated report.

Results and Discussion

The following nine themes were derived from the analyses (see Table 1) and will be further discussed in the following section, as well as explored and combined to create concluding hypotheses. Pseudo-names have been applied to ensure anonymity.

Table 1: Pre- and Post-Treatment Themes

Pre-Treatment Themes	Post-Treatment Themes
Participants' Self-Concept	Success of Experiential Education
Connection to Nature	Changes in Understanding of Issues
Understanding of Current Issues	Emergent Emotions
Relation to Ecofeminism	Empowerment
	Changes in Self-Concept

Pre-Treatment

The goal of the pre-treatment interview was to gain insight into the participant's self-concept and understanding of social and environmental issues. I was pleased to find that they had a good understanding of basic ecofeminist concepts, demonstrated in the following themes: self-concept and connection to nature, understanding of current issues, and relation to ecofeminism.

Self-concept and connection to nature. In the first interview, it became clear that the women felt a great connection to nature; each spoke of the feelings of calm and peacefulness they experience outdoors. As Emma noted, in nature "I am free to be me." This supports Copland's research (1999) that states being in nature allows an escape from the confinement of social constructs. When asked what it was she finds escape from in nature, Anne told me, "The fact that you have to work nine to five every day, and do things you don't want to do just so you can have what society thinks is a good life." Participants varied in how they pursue this connection. Rebecca and Anne mentioned activities such as hiking and walking in order to reap the relaxation benefits. Kathryn mentioned that for her connecting with nature used to mean doing sports and activities, but has now expanded to include spending quiet time sitting in nature as a form of self-care. Emma had the most in-depth ways of connecting to nature, such as gardening, yoga, and tree planting, and explained, "everything I'm doing is geared toward conservation, being close to nature, doing good for it." This statement was closest to the ecofeminist view of connecting to

nature, which is that our outdoor activities should benefit the environment as well as ourselves (The Green Fuse, n.d.). All women expressed that their need to be outdoors regularly was part of their self-identity. However, for the most part, connecting to nature was mostly self-serving, suggesting egocentricity versus ecocentricity. My hope was that through the workshop they would learn how to use their connection to nature to promote change.

Understanding of current issues.

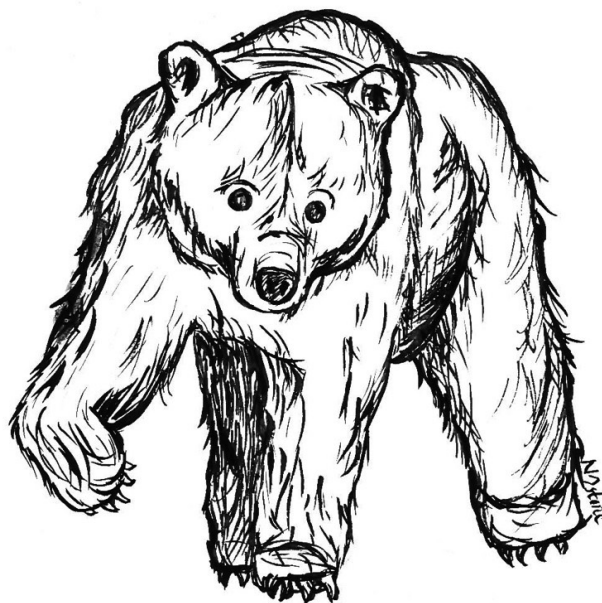
Participants had a good understanding of current issues. When discussing the challenges women today face, the wage gap was the one most commonly mentioned. Other struggles included unequal career opportunities, balancing societal expectations with personal goals, body image issues, and limited rights throughout the world. When asked about their own experiences with systematic oppression, Kathryn, Rebecca and Emma all mentioned they feel their abilities are often doubted due to their gender. Rebecca spoke of a canoe trip where she was told not to carry certain heavy items. She reported that she ignored the instructions and "was glad I showed [the teacher] I could do it, because a teacher wouldn't say that to a guy." Anne conveyed that she may have missed elite sporting opportunities because sports scouts are more likely to invest in men's sports than women's. The participants had a good understanding of how oppression is built into our society and constantly reinforced by the patriarchy. They also had a good working knowledge of environmental issues.

The environment suffers from human's lack of respect for it in its own right (Plumwood, 1991). Emma supported this, saying, "People have gotten into a really bad habit of just not remembering to be respectful." Destruction and consumerism were also discussed in terms of climate change, carbon dioxide emissions and non-renewable resources. As Kathryn stated, "with all the destruction with non-renewable resources and pollution, people are living such consumer-based lifestyles that it's destroying so much." Anne expressed an understanding of how ignoring environmental issues is a systematic problem (Alcid, 2013) when she said that the biggest issues facing the environment in Canada stem from politicians and "the acts of not protecting vital, ecological areas."

Local ecofeminist movements also focus on the passionate and emotional aspects of stewardship, which allow people to be fulfilled while caring for their bioregion (Buckingham, 2004). Participants' activities and daily routines suggest ecofeminist motives, regardless of their awareness of this. The participants collectively participated in many different organized initiatives such as social justice fundraising, tree planting and building sustainable housing for single-mother households. In their daily lives, these women make efforts such as conserving energy and water, recycling and mentoring young girls. All these activities relate to ecofeminist values, such as sustainability, equality and passion (The Green Fuse, n.d.).

Relation to ecofeminism. In regards to their relation to ecofeminist philosophy, the participants held many congruent beliefs. Their biggest variance was that they were not yet making the connection between ecological and social problems. None mentioned that the wage gap contributes to the number of women and single-parent families that live in environmentally

degraded areas (Chircop, 2008). Overall, I felt as though the participants were in a good mindset to participate in the workshop and embrace ecofeminism.



Post-Treatment

As it was hoped, all the participants described the workshop as a positive experience. A general consensus was that their views on ecological and social issues were not drastically changed, but were expanded and given depth. Anne said that the experience made her look at Canada from a more critical perspective, and Emma reported that she found the program beneficial because it allowed her to "look a little deeper not only within myself, but also within some of the ways I think or some of the ways I feel about things. Now I feel like I can actually change something." This feeling of perspective and empowerment is apparent in the following themes that emerged: experiential education, changes in understanding, emergent emotions, empowerment, and changes in self-concept.

Experiential education. Anne supported ecofeminist attitudes towards experiential education, saying that she felt "present and involved." Rebecca expressed that she liked the edible plant hike because

learning how things work made her feel more connected to and passionate about the environment. All four women mentioned an inspirational discussion about the lack of composting in Thunder Bay; Anne described them getting “fired up about [wanting to change this]”. I was glad to hear that local issues were being discussed as many ecofeminist movements begin as grassroots projects (Buckingham, 2004). Kathryn said planting seeds served as a reminder of the importance of the environment and her connection with it. The free-fall writing inspired Rebecca to use it as a technique to increase awareness, and Anne was enthused by the other participants’ opinions and views. This is an important element because ecofeminism relies on cross-issue support, networking and collaboration (Chircop, 2008). The participants seemed to become motivated and passionate as they worked through the activities.

Changes in understanding of interconnectedness. Ecofeminism applies feminist values of equality and compassion to an integrated view of social and ecological justice in order to create new perspectives (The Green Fuse, n.d.). The participants left the workshop with a greater appreciation of the connectedness of the issues. For example, when asked about a change in perspective, Rebecca gave the following statement that is close to the core of ecofeminism: “It was cool to think about [social and environmental issues] combining and working together, because when they come together like that, they’re even more powerful than they would be separately.” Emma said that as a result of the workshop, she was able to “explore sides of issues I may not have seen before,” which is very important because with new perspectives, we can find new solutions (Buckingham, 2004). Kathryn also saw new opportunities when she began looking at issues “from a Mother Nature point of view and realizing how women can be protectors.” Anne encountered a “snowball effect” where the connectivity of issues kept producing new thoughts and ideas. I was glad to hear that the workshop had been effective in this area.

Emergent emotions. Our world and all its injustices is not necessarily a pleasurable topic to discuss. Feelings of frustration and dismay came to the participants during the workshop. Kathryn felt frustrated at herself for not remembering the power of connecting with nature and Emma expressed anger and disgust at some of the pollution and poverty statistics that revealed what she called our society’s “archaic beliefs.” These beliefs show that ecofeminism education is important because systematic oppression is not always apparent to those in the system, and sometimes problematic concepts need to be pointed out (Buckingham, 2004). Anne described oppression of the poor as “annoying” cycles that are hard to break and also said that she felt “passionate and sympathetic.” Fortunately, they found that these negative emotions could be channeled into the passionate motivation that drives most ecofeminist works (Plumwood, 1991). The participants described overall positive emotions that facilitated motivation to create change, which each participant spoke of in terms of small actions and large movements.

Empowerment. As previously expressed, the participants all mentioned their new-found enthusiasm for composting in Thunder Bay. Anne’s frustration fueled her drive to create change as she realized that there are “so many little things that need to be addressed.” Rebecca now aspires to bring her peers a deeper connection to nature through activities learned at the workshop. Gaining these tools and motivation is empowering to young women because when women feel that they are able to change elements of their own world, their sense of well-being is amplified (Barrie et al., 2000). Agreeing, Kathryn reflected on a central point saying, “ecological issues could and should be taken up by women because we already have that nurturing aspect, so why not extend it to the environment?” Emma emphasized the importance of empowerment when she stated that she learned “women have such a powerful influence when they’re told that they can, as opposed to being shut down

and oppressed.” As participants came to these discoveries, they enhanced their own self-concepts.

Changes in self-concept. As Emma told me at the beginning of our second interview, the workshop gave her a chance to “hone in on her own personal definition of feminism.” I asked the participants if their self-concept had changed at all over the course of the treatment, and all participants answered “yes,” and in a positive way; they each expressed a renewed sense of excitement to connect with nature. Anne said that she would now consider herself an ecofeminist, as did Rebecca, because the more she learned about ecofeminism, the more she realized that it “matched up with what [she] was already thinking.” Despite a rough start to the morning, Kathryn walked away from the workshop more grounded, and with a “more positive sense of self.” I felt the workshop had been effective when Emma said that her definition of her own feminism had changed because, “as a woman, that’s something that sits really deeply in me. I am just as powerful and have as much influence as a man. [My self-concept] totally changed.”

Overall, I think that the workshop was empowering and effective at influencing these young women’s perceptions of themselves, the environment and society.

Conclusion

This study has shown that experiential ecofeminist education has the potential to be effective and warrants further study. It would be interesting to see the effects of a multi-day experience, how the effects would change in a population of women who did not have a strong connection to nature, and what changes the addition of male participants would bring. In conclusion, through a connection to nature and others, as well as an integrated view of themselves in their society and bioregion, young women can increase their level of positive self-concept and create positive and lasting change in their worlds.

Notes

1. Throughout this article, the first person use of “I” refers to Melanie Fowler.

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Outdoor, Experiential Education: Time for the Curriculum to Stand Alone?

By Gary Pluim and Simon Francis

At a presentation we facilitated during the 2014 COEO conference at the Bark Lake Leadership Centre, a lively debate ensued on the merits and costs of promoting outdoor and experiential education (OEE) as a stand-alone curriculum. On one hand, many of the session's participants felt that legitimizing a curriculum so wholly embraced by the OEE community would affirm and legitimize the work that they do. As one member put it: "I would love to have somebody say that outdoor education is a special subject, and [I think that] the program should be run by somebody who is qualified to run it."

Yet many participants also felt that in an effort to distinguish OEE from other disciplines, it might ultimately face the same limitations as other subjects. "I find that the nice thing is that there is no curriculum!" suggested one outdoor educator in attendance. "If we had a document that said 'thou shalt teach this'—which is what curriculum documents do for math, English, and physical education— [it wouldn't allow for] that flexibility, and having that flexibility in that curriculum is necessary. It's absolutely necessary!"

Thus, while clearly there was some enthusiasm amongst the group to formally validate OEE approaches, topics and pedagogies, many felt that developing a separate OEE curriculum with epistemologies to correspond with existing, formal Ontario curricula might limit the very intent behind its movement as a stand-alone subject. After facilitating the session, we continued the discussion between the two of us, and this article intends to further stimulate this conversation by summarizing the key issues as we see them.

Problems with and Context of the Status Quo

Standard practice for outdoor educators

who go outdoors to implement hands-on, environmental, ecological, character-building or adventure-based activities is to find a way to link these approaches with existing, official curriculum expectations. Experientially investigating a nearby pond might be justified by biology curriculum expectations, strengthening the bond amongst students through trust activities by drama expectations, and reflective journaling on a transformative experience through a language arts curriculum. Teachers justify the time their students spend outdoors immersed in these activities by drawing specific connections to strands in Ontario curriculum documents. The activities themselves are legitimized by their cross-linkage to formal, approved curriculum. Making these connections to innumerable curricular strands across numerous school subjects can be tedious, forced and haphazard.

Outdoor educators have become skilled in using OEE to integrate multiple expectations from different curriculum areas. However, many have also recognized that, at the very least, certain OEE benefits are lost when OEE is not adequately valued as a stand-alone. Conclusions drawn from research with outdoor educators in Ontario, published recently in this journal by Bell, Pollock and Barnes (2015), support this claim:

OE is not viewed as a stand-alone subject but as a course that resides within the environmental studies program. Benefits, such as positive growth opportunities for students, were missing from policy documents yet clearly articulated by outdoor leaders highlighting the fact that OE tends to be undervalued and misunderstood. (p. 32)

Isn't OEE sufficiently distinct to warrant its own disciplinary status? Can't outdoor,

ecological and experiential learning have its own rightful location as a separate curriculum document? If not, what prevents OEE curriculum and pedagogy from standing alone? Indeed, the case for a stand-alone OEE curriculum could be made from both an empirical and theoretical perspective.

The Case for OEE as Stand-Alone

A conceptual case for recognizing the distinction of OEE is based on its epistemological approach. Whether in or out of the classroom, using experience as a pedagogical strategy is a deliberate technique that opposes one focused on precisely-defined learning outcomes. Applying the experiential approach outdoors most vividly illustrates the distinction of OEE. It would not be uncommon, for instance, to plan a group hike, a canoe trip, or an individual solo in a way that is impossible to forecast what actually transpires during the experience. The unpredictability of coming across a blue heron preparing for flight, a vixen tending to its pups, or a spider surveying its catch in its intricate web are instances for which a teacher cannot prepare—nor would s/he want to artificially stage—in a natural setting. Similarly, the learning opportunities presented by variable changes of weather patterns, the properties of crashing waves at a beach, or the exhibition of constellations in the night sky are curricula designed by *capturing experiences*, not through orchestrating outcomes.

These teachable moments are a staple in the pedagogies of OEE teachers, and apply as equally to the irregularity of group dynamics and individual character building as they do to the patterns of nature. For instance, the attempts, challenges, comfort-zone realizations, successes and a-ha moments that individuals and groups achieve in a low ropes course, or the process of groups “storming” to reach synergies in their dynamic are experiences that are most powerful when skilled facilitators resist the

urge to control and contrive an experience within the bounds of a formal curriculum. When the construction of an OEE learning experience focuses on *creating a space*—bringing people together with resources and a purpose—for learning, on developing a heightened consciousness of place, and on seizing opportunities for reflection on learning, this is when learning *naturally* occurs.

Furthermore, although a curriculum might be identically constructed for all learners, the way each individual learner processes, reflects upon, and integrates this learning into his or her existing knowledge varies greatly. This is especially true for OEE curricula, particularly those that are geared to introspection as is common for high ropes elements, wilderness solos, and journaling. Clearly, OEE has a distinct epistemological basis in which the focus for teachers to create learning opportunities through which students construct their own meaning contrasts deeply with teaching opportunities for standard school curricula, those that are oriented towards documented learning outcomes, and that correspond to implied and expected accountability measures.

What Stands in the Way of a Stand-alone OEE Curriculum?

Outdoor education as a stand-alone curriculum is not a new proposition, a point reinforced by several participants at the COEO session. When OEE first entered the sphere of formal education in the 1960's, prescient educators acquired land in various locations across Ontario so that relationships, connections, and learning could be developed through outdoor education. Over time, increased ties to classroom curriculum have amplified the appeal of school trips to OEE centres but also necessitated links between OEE goals and official school curriculum. Today's students and teachers are beneficiaries of the resources demarcated through the foresight of these visionaries, but are also implicated in the tensions between outdoor teaching approaches and the pervasive

trends in education towards demonstrated outcomes, standardization, and educational accountability.

Problematically, the types of approaches used in OEE are typically not so neatly associated with contemporary measures of educational accountability. As one student in Gary's OEE class at Lakehead University concluded, "How do we define when experiential learning has or has not taken place ... in terms of assessing students learning (for grading) when each student may take away something different from any given activity?" Indeed, how does one assess the character growth of a student, particularly over a short exposure to an OEE setting? How can we—and *why would we want to*—standardize teachable moments, whether natural phenomena, individual growth, or group dynamics? Topics with exceptionally deep connections to OEE—spiritual development, moral education, or emotional intelligence—are especially difficult to measure in outcomes-based curriculum.

These problems of evaluation, standardization and accountability are a major impetus to legitimizing OEE as its own curriculum, and also a clue as to why OEE has not naturally evolved into a subject of its own. One reason that some subjects rise above others in curricular decisions is their disciplinary suitability to produce quantifiable (and thus, standardizable) outcomes. In contemporary structures of education, for example, OEE does not enjoy the firm planting of mathematics, science, or language disciplines that have developed standardized curricula and means of assessment. Such a ranking is reminiscent of education sociologist Basil Bernstein's "Hierarchy of Subject Matter", in which *hard*, empirically-based school subjects rise in prominence against other *soft*, subjects that are more difficult to contain, define, and all-importantly, evaluate. OEE, by its very nature, is inherently connected to such latter qualities, and as surfaced in our session time and time again at COEO: The anomaly of the outdoor experience is what

truly sets OEE apart.

The COEO Session on Stand-alone Curriculum

In an attempt to "practice what we preach," our COEO discussion piggybacked on three break-out groups: A small group trust exercise, an individual mini-solo, and a "get-to-know a tree" activity. By using these prototype initiatives as the basis for our discussion, our subsequent debate hinged on tangible references to these common OEE experiences. The feedback from the group echoed many of the theoretical arguments made in this article so far. As one participant summarized:

Each of us took something different from [these activities]. It reminds me of how powerful the actual experience is, and how rich they are for their learning. A lot of the learning that takes place in schools is not based on some sort of experience. It's not surprising to me that a lot of kids are disconnected to their learning because they don't have the experienced to build on.

And yet, the participants of the session also voiced concern of a hasty movement towards a standalone curriculum. Concern was voiced of the potential consequences if OEE was a discipline unto itself. Suggested one member, "Is the goal to have a curriculum? Or is the goal to bring OEE more value? And is *this* the right means? I think it could limit us as much as it could liberate us."

It is worth noting that the primacy of experience as the foundation of learning is not especially new, nor for that matter particularly radical. The dominance of experience in learning can be traced back twenty years to Laura Joplin ("Anytime a person learns, he must "experience" the subject"); a decade previous to Bert Horwood ("All learning is credible, whether made over a coffee ... or by sweating a calculus problem in class", 1987, p.91); to John Dewey well before them ("We do not learn from experience...

we learn from *reflecting* on experience” italics added, 1938); and several millennia to Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, Book 1 (“men [sic] of experience succeed even better than those who have theory without experience” see Robinson, 2015, p. 49).

As more than one professional at our COEO presentation pointed out, this is also not the first time this discussion about a stand-alone curriculum has come up. One participant recalled similar talking points and searing debates back in the early ’70s. But is there now a new context and opportunity for pushing this idea forward? And if so, what characteristics would an OEE curriculum embody today? What would a stand-alone OEE curriculum look like on paper?

Moving Forward

A formal, OEE curriculum would fundamentally need to deal with — if not reconcile — the epistemological tension between the focus on approach, experience, and learning of experiential education, and the demands for standards, results, and accountability in contemporary, official curriculum. To stay true to its nature, an OEE curriculum would be centred on activity-based, experience-focused, and highlight flexible outcomes. It would involve multiple forms of reaching and representing learning, and appreciate a wide array of potential outcomes to testify to student learning. This curriculum would be framed to be taught outdoors, and all strands would be necessarily linked to the environment.

Would it ever be foreseeable to have a curriculum that is not empirically based? A curriculum that is not founded on pre-determined strands and outcomes, but on methodology, on process, or even emotions? A curriculum with a holistic approach, one that expects that every student will achieve distinct outcomes? Perhaps. But as becomes clear, fundamental changes would need to be addressed to re-define our thinking about curriculum, assessment, and learning. Let the discussion continue!

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Friluftsliv in Practice: Being Courageous

By Chris Peters

"Friluftsliv...is not meant to shore up our modern way of life but to help us, as individuals and as a society, out of it..."

—Nils Faarlund

I awoke in the dark, the bed shaking with the force of the wind. The cataclysmic shudder of the house in its frame, the dark—all prompted sudden wonder and worry. Would the roof hold? Rain/sleet stuccoed across the windows so hard as to be mistaken for rocks. Suddenly awake, I went around the house checking for leaks and to be sure my daughters were okay. I stepped away from the windows as they sucked and bulged ominously.

Still feeling the effects of a day spent shovelling only two days before, I watched rivulets run down the dark street, cutting wide sluices through the snow quickly turning to slush. Awake but tired, unable to do anything other than wait it out, I went back to bed. Thinking. Winter isn't the same as when I grew up, although I am only 38. The pronounced periods of cold are shorter. Absent even. Snows come and are harried away by lashing rainstorms, the precipitation of which then freezes. Winter is a depleted season, more grey and wet than I remember it. But memory is a fickle beast, elusive, hard to pin down.

Yet, winter was the season when we could look back over the year that was, a glass of something warm in hand and reflect. What went well? What could be done better? Reflection often leads to thoughts of the future. Watching the flicker of the flames through the fireplace grill, dreams of the spring and summer to come would spring forth as bright as an arcing flanker into a late summer sky.

Our depleted winter is a symptom of our inability, as a society and as individuals, to reflect and take stock of where we are. Of where we would like to go. We are stuck in the rat race, whether we like it or not.

I argued in an article a few years ago in *Pathways* that Friluftsliv, the Norwegian philosophy–practice, could be part of the solution to the ongoing environmental crisis in Newfoundland Labrador (Peters, 2015). I still believe this is true. In this article I identify three examples of how as a father, teacher and student of *this* place, I have tried to bring about the practice and philosophy of Friluftsliv meaningfully. They illuminate, I believe, another path that can realign us *within* our lived biotic communities.

A Sled

I envisioned a sled cutting across the snow, the laughter of my daughters caught out in plumes of breath on a cold sunny winter's day. The notion brought a smile I couldn't shake but had to act upon. I caught myself, the teacher, daydreaming of the sled and season to come.

In building the sled, I repurposed a wood pallet left over from some flooring renovations. I wanted a longer sled than I could get so that I could fit both of my daughters comfortably on it. For runners I recycled cross-country skis I found in the rafters of the shed. As I took them down my fingers came away with a greasy film of dust. Neglected, they hadn't seen snow in years.

The finished product is heavy. It's 18 inches across, 4 feet long. Framed by two-by-fours joined with decking screws, wooden slats separated by a couple inches for sitting on. I joined the skis to posts cut to fit the skis rolling outline, sealed with glue and screws. I attached metal swivels through which I threaded and tied off a rope harness. I painted the sled turquoise, a colour I knew my daughters would like.

But the seasons haven't cooperated. Temperatures have swung wildly, snows giving way to rains and back to snow. The sled was tested, cutting a clean line through

the glistening white snowpack and I had my moment when my daughters' laughter rang through the clear, cold air. It was hard earned, sweat beading across my brow and upper lip, thighs burning. But those laughs were a great balm.

Friluftsliv is about immersion in the natural world. The sled is but one means of doing so. More often than not the sled can't be used because the snows have been washed away, hard skeins of ice frozen in their stead.

Treading carefully, my daughters and I threaded our way up and across through this landscape, yellowed grasses held in icy relief. My youngest daughter laughing heartily every time she fell down, as if she was in on some hidden joke. Or perhaps it was just the joy of being outside. They built a shelter out of sticks barely large enough for the youngest, and we followed frozen moose tracks into the dense brush. It brought to mind Sigmund Kvaloy Setreng's contention that we need to reinvigorate children as contributors to society's survival. They and we need to be reminded that we are part of the natural world (Henderson & Jensen, 2015).

Surfing

Down the rocky undulations of the Southern Shore we drove, a fog bank threatening to overwhelm the sun at every turn. The peculiarities of geography here, with cold, shallow waters butting up against granite cliffs creates fog so dense that even howling winds can't blow away. Finally, at a place called Chance Cove we turned off the cut of asphalt and away from the Avalon Barrens. Low-slung snags of boreal forest giving way finally to a long crescent of rocky beach. Surf pounded in, the hissing approach of waves, the rasp and knock of rocks meeting rocks, and the foaming break background music. Behind the seafront marshy ponds led back up a low valley. The trees grew tall below the grasping maw of the winds. The air smelt richly of the forest, of spruce sap and fir needles, of berries and August grasses. Over it all the smell of the ocean, clean and tanged

by wet rocks. Bees and butterflies rose and fell in such numbers that they were best described as a chorus. And the fog, a swirl of grey and white held off shore.

Friends of ours had camped out here, and we walked down a narrow path where wild roses grew and perfumed the air to meet them. Gnarled, grey driftwood poked up amidst the beach rocks. We made our way to a pondfront, a sudden smear of sand that welcomed our feet after the rolling rocks that separated pond from ocean. The pond was no deeper than mid-thigh so that we could walk far out into the water. Minnows sculled about careless until our shadows came too close. The girls plunged about, laughing at the sucking grasp of the sands. They explored the grasses and we found an explosion of feathers and picked over bones.

My wife and friends took the children to the stream that emptied the ponds into the ocean for a swim. I walked down after them, looking out into the rush of surf, the sound suffusing everything beyond the forest, and found myself face-to-face with a seal. It watched me with rapt curiosity and I called out to it, whistled. It hung about for a time, then fell back without a splash only to rise again, closer. But more nervous, and it fell away again, gone.

As the day closed with an explosion of late summer colours, yellows and reds bright against a pale violet sky my youngest daughter and I picked blueberries. We had brought no tent and the mosquitoes, always present, came out in unseen but felt hordes. Bloody welts rose on my arms and legs. It was time to go.

But before we left my wife and I stood on the beach a moment, arm in arm. We scared some sandpipers that rose suddenly, then ghosted back and away, unseen to continue their feeding unmolested. The roar and collapse of the waves, the air sweetened by the meeting of forest and sea—it was an intoxicating mix.

My wife said, "This would be a great place to go surfing."



So it would. And maybe we will. More importantly, that day reminded me of the joy, the sheer fun the world can provide if we will stop to let it.

The Garden

I have run a school garden program over the better part of the last eight years. Some years with more success than others. But it has carried on. I feel that the garden roots students, highlights what can and cannot grow here, highlights the particularities of this place.

Of late, Newfoundland and particularly the north-east Avalon has had some fickle growing weather. Some years spring has come early, and a swampy continental heat has permeated. Other years, like 2015, spring didn't come at all and it wasn't until August that the prevailing damp and cold blew off. Such conditions demand a degree of stubbornness, of stiff-upper lip determination to prevail. But they also demand a community of support, of encouragement.

And that community is now vital in a place like Newfoundland. Despite a tradition of self-reliance that lasted nearly 500 years wherein small potato plots and turnip beds

were nourished with caplin and seaweed to encourage the biotic growth that nourishes plants. The sea literally fed the land. And these isolated communities, often several days' sail from larger centres, sustained themselves with what they fished, hunted and grew.

But we have lost a lot of those lessons. Today Newfoundland Labrador imports over 90% of its fruit and vegetables. At any one time we have only three days produce available. The whims of ice can cut us off entirely. The vagaries of distant droughts bring with them ever increasing grocery bills. We have given up on that communal knowledge of growing food for the promise of an easier life by buying our food. Today, Newfoundland Labrador has the lowest rate of consumption of fruits and vegetables in Canada. We are the most overweight, obese province. We lead the country in Type-2 diabetes for adults and juveniles. These are jarring statistics that illustrate a life lived in isolation. We have sacrificed health for cheaper produce. We have given up ownership of knowledge that sustained and nourished life for centuries because it's cheaper to produce that food elsewhere.

Only, the lie of that last statement is coming home to roost of late.

It is the soil, literally and figuratively, from which the soul is fed. And that's what the gardening community of St. John's is—offering support and encouragement even in the depths of a July that refused to warm. That community is the port to which every gardener-sailor must return.

So every year I lead workshops with students, getting them to turn over the compost. We mix compost and soil to make soil blocks into which we deposit seeds. We discuss the building of soil and ideal growing conditions. Sometimes these sessions lead to the unexpected, like while demonstrating the compost cycle with the bins we startled a Norwegian wharf rat from its winter lair.

What, wondered the Grade 1 students, was

the giant mouse doing in the compost? I can only be thankful their teacher didn't notice.

We plant out peas and beans, and carefully plant out those seedlings the students have (over) watered in the garden. Lettuce and spinach, tomatoes and zucchini. We also plant potatoes in one bed, onions and garlic in another. There's a whole bed of strawberries.

I am not teaching the students about ecology, per se. I can hope that some of them see some worth in learning to plant vegetables. There's a practicality to the garden. But I really like the idea of students getting dirt under their fingernails and on the knees of their pants. I enjoy the wind rustling through my hair and the sun beaming across my face. I feel, as a teacher, we forget that we are always learning. That sometimes just the opportunity to be beyond the classroom is enough, to run your hands through soil and be part of something larger than any one of us.

Friluftsliv's embrace of the world, within the context of community—both human and natural—offers one the conditions to learn and teach not just the curriculum, but the necessity of the human to the natural world, and vice versa. It allows us to appreciate the wholeness of Life.

"To have courage you must be courageous."
—Sigmund Kvaloy Setreng

I brought a class of Grade 9 Canadian history students on a walk from the school to St. John's harbour Narrows. Ostensibly, it was to visit Fort Waldegrave, one of the wartime batteries that protected St. John's from U-boat torpedo attacks during the Battle of the Atlantic in World War II. In reality, I find January a long bleak month of recycled air. The walk would clear my head, and perhaps give my students a respite.

We arrived at the battery site perched high over The Narrows, looking down. A brisk northerly was blowing, reverberating off the rocky walls of Signal Hill that culminate in

Cabot Tower. The students shrieked with the cold, hats were blown askew. I asked, then asked again, for everyone to come closer, so that I wouldn't have to shout. They crowded in: "This, I said, is Fort..."

I turned as I spoke, meaning to encapsulate the area as part of the battery. Instead, a juvenile eagle soared on unseen thermals directly into our line of vision. Indeed, it hovered at eye level. It was perhaps 10 feet from where I stood. The wind held it there. I caught startled, wondering murmurs behind me. And then the wind shifted and a slight movement of its feathers caught the current of air and the eagle soared out and down towards the harbour, scaring up a cacophony of gulls and crows who followed warily in its wake.

There was nothing left to say.

I didn't try.

Friluftsliv is a vehicle to enter the process of integrating ourselves back into our biotic and human communities. Of bringing us back to nature. Because, to paraphrase Henry David Thoreau, in Nature is the preservation of the world.

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Breathing Life

By Laurie Faith

Take a deep breath and smile. Education is improving.

The factors contributing to this change are all around us—advances in brain research, explosive growth in sharing and learning on the Internet, and an innovation-based economy that is making lofty demands. This climate is radically reshaping the work that teachers are doing, and it's a grand time to be a teacher. At my school we are helping children succeed by paying close attention to unique learning profiles, teaching based on executive functioning, exploring powerful and research-based technology, and addressing mental health issues head on. Teachers are experimenting with radically new approaches, and finally there's enough momentum to let go of redundant practices. On most days, the children seem genuinely happy. On many days, the classrooms feel electric.

This momentum has energized our collaboration with teams of teachers from other Toronto-area schools. We have hosted several visiting school teams, and have begun to present our insights at teaching conferences and universities. Our colleagues arrive at our workshops with enthusiasm and curiosity, and often reciprocate the invitation—"Come and see what we're doing!"—as they leave. The research, technology and economic mandate of the 21st century are like a new game and with new rules. Many of us are rushing around gleefully, experimenting and learning.

Along those lines, let me share something I have learned through collaboration: "breathing life." A science teacher named James Hay shared this idea with me on a visit to Sterling Hall in Toronto. James is an avid environmentalist who has been recognized with a Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence for distinguished inquiry-based teaching.

Lately, James is trying to breathe life into

everything he teaches. No matter what he is discussing, James tries to connect it to the living world and nature. What do vectors have to do with nature? Combustion engines? Conservative politics? James does this to raise awareness of the fact that nature is important, and that it is connected to every single thing in our world.

My work with James made me curious about other uses for breathing life. I work with students with a variety of learning disabilities. They have difficulty understanding abstract concepts, maintaining attention and using reading and writing to learn, but they are wonderfully bright and curious. To a certain extent, their challenges are only more exaggerated versions of the spectrum of challenges faced by more typical learners. They are canaries in the coal mine, and they have forced me to be very strategic and mindful about how I teach.

Lately, with my grade four students, I have been developing fresh ways to "connect" at the beginning of a lesson. This refers to the opening of a lesson, where a teacher tries to engage students, wake up their attention, fire up their interest and activate as many parts of the brain as possible to allow maximum uptake of the learning that will follow. I often use metaphors, linking abstract new concepts to more basic or primary ones that they already understand. James' notion of breathing life caused me to wonder if finding metaphors relating to nature might be an even more powerful tactic.

Nature is so much more complex than the built world. Children who have had rich experiences in nature have had the opportunity to interact with almost every mathematical, scientific and artistic concept known to humans. They experience this learning with all of their senses, storing memories and understanding deep in the memory of their

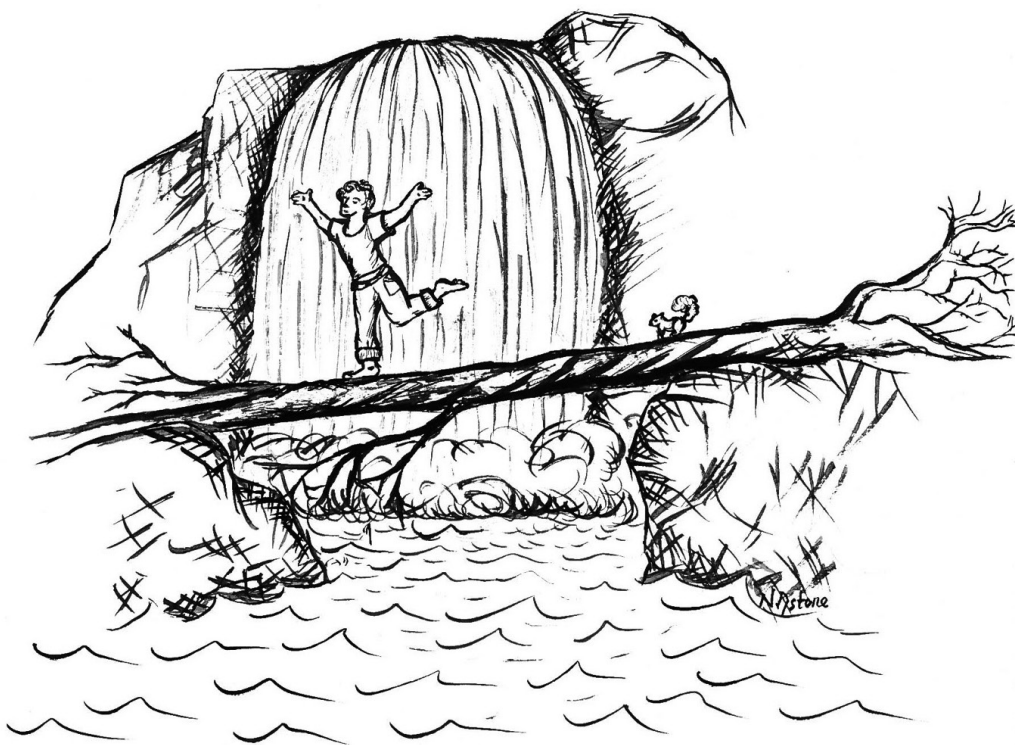
whole body. We really mustn't deprive them of this learning. Assuming we don't, it can be used to breathe life into the aspects of our curriculum that seem more rigid or abstract.

For example, I might open a lesson on research by suggesting, "researching is like being an eagle, swooping over a vast landscape searching for prey. You don't waste your time and energy 'attacking' just anything. You select your prey strategically." Using this rich, broad concept, we can continue to talk about problems with their research with wisdom that is second nature. "You didn't find what you were looking for. You have to swoop all the way back up to the table of contents and take a good overall look." Recently I took my class outside to try pushing over a tree before explaining the importance of evidence, proof and support in essays. For weeks, our conversations about our writing were animated by children's own memories of pulling at stubborn roots in a garden, or their experience seeing a tree uprooted by a lightning strike. By embedding my teaching in real life experiences and nature,

I wonder if I can activate my students' thinking, memory and understanding in a deeper and more powerful way.

Surrounded as we are by iPads, movie stars and fast food takeout, it's easy to forget how recently our human brains stopped having to survive as part of nature. In fact, our modern culture may trick us into forgetting who we are, how we are made, what we need and how we think and learn. In fact, our brains developed for 4.5 million years while completely immersed in nature, adapting slowly in response to plants, animals, wind, water, earth and fire. Surely our brains have retained some of the machinery for responding deeply, intuitively and instinctively to natural stimuli. We are probably more cerebrally connected to nature than we would ever suspect. And to whatever extent this is true for adults, it must be at least double that for children.

Cerebrally connected? It wouldn't surprise me. There are areas of our brains whose function is unknown. Perhaps those unused portions of grey matter have to do with our forsaken connection to nature.



How might we benefit from tapping into those? We know that there are links between exposure to nature and learning. For example, children learn better in a classroom next to a crashing ocean than a humming motorway (Hunter et al., 2010). How many associations like this are there, and is there a way to harness this power more intentionally? Perhaps evoking nature in our everyday lessons can recruit more of the brain for learning.

I contemplated the idea of nature and learning with my colleagues who teach kindergarten. They reminded me of the unnatural quality of the written language. Kindergarten children often reverse numbers and letters, and they do it unapologetically because they do not live in a flat, one-sided world. Everything in a child's early experience—blocks, bugs, trees, people, food—can be manipulated, flipped over and explored freely without losing meaning. Consider how incredibly flat and lifeless our grown up, modern, real world seems. Bringing abstract concepts back to nature helps translate them into a language that children are developmentally ready to understand.

Finally, I consider a book that another colleague brought to my attention, and that is being passed around our school right now—*Moonwalking with Einstein*, by Joshua Foer. One of Foer's ideas relates to the "baker/Baker paradox." Basically, when shown a photo of a stranger it is much easier to remember, when asked some time later, that that person is a baker than to remember that their last name is Baker. Foer explains, "When you hear that the man in the photo is a baker, that fact gets embedded in a whole network of ideas about what it means to be a baker" (p. 45). The idea of a baker instantly conjures up the smells, sounds, sights and long-term memories we have about baking. Similarly, at school, we can couple abstract concepts to natural, physical, real-life things that children understand and relate to deeply. This way, we can embed school learning diversely into the sensory, emotional and physical places in their brains. We can

convert abstract concepts to tangible ones that they are more able to understand, remember and manipulate.

Education right now is a hotbed of change, inspiration and hope. This new idea, breathing life, it is like a fire. A small spark has grown into a blaze that is gathering strength every day. Every time I think it might have gone out, it springs up somewhere I didn't expect it to be and burns twice as hard. It is useful in every subject.

I wonder if there might be a big discovery in this breathing life idea of Mr. Hay's. If my students are able to make some kind of connection between abstract ideas and the natural, physical world, will they be able to understand more fully, and remember more naturally? Is there some ancient, dusty, instinctive equipment in the brain just waiting to help us make these connections? I'm not sure, but, with the help of my students and colleagues at school and our partners in the wider educational community, I aim to find out.

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Outdoor Education: Same Direction, Different Path

By David J. Hawke

Outdoor education...just what is that, anyway? Perhaps the answer depends on who you ask. Some may think it to be a nature study class, others look at it as an adventure experience, while a few feel that any activity conducted out of doors, be it cycling, skiing or running, is part of an outdoor education.

Trying to define the term was an interesting challenge, at least in my mind, as I sat watching 85 outdoor educators at a recent gathering. They seemed pretty sure of who they were, especially since their organization is called the Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario (COEO). For many years I, too, was a member of this keen bunch of outdoorsy teacher-types, so it was most interesting to compare the "then" with the "now" in regards to who these people are and what they do.

My presentation to them was billed as keynote, which carries its own measure of pressure. These folks are expecting guidance and affirmation of the highest degree, words that they can carry forward to sustain them in times of doubt and challenge. Or maybe I just let my imagination and ego run wild a bit too much. Perhaps they just need some after-dinner entertainment.

A young woman arrives early and plunks herself down in a nearby chair, her face a healthy glow of winter-exposed redness. We start to chat, and it is revealed that she's not a classroom teacher, but rather a naturalist with a conservation authority, and that she conducts programs for visiting students at the Tiffin Conservation Area. She has been actively participating in as many workshops as possible this weekend in order to gain new knowledge on ways to enrich a student's outdoor experience.

As the evening progressed, I met university students, elementary school teachers,

secondary school teachers, outdoor centre naturalists, and a couple of independent adventure tourism operators. Some were keen outdoor sports enthusiasts, and a few looked as though they had very limited outdoor experiences of any kind. However, they all called themselves "outdoor educators." There certainly seemed to be a common theme here, although interests and pursuits varied high and wide.

And herein lay my challenge as a keynote speaker: how to address such a diverse audience and deliver a message that resonates deeply with every one? Hey, no pressure, I got this. So why was I starting to break into a bit of a speaker's pre-presentation sweat?

Thankfully, as with most presentations, once you get started, it just rolls along. Although the topic was "Winter Wildlife," it was under the umbrella of the conference's name, "Make Peace With Winter." So the show started with explanations and pictures of birds and mammals that either migrate, hibernate or adapt. Ages old, standard stuff, really.

But what wasn't standard was that a lot of these folks, who were so keenly listening, had no backup or little support back home from their school board. They were finding ways, on their own, to integrate outdoor experiences that addressed math, science, art, engineering, social studies, physical education and whatever else the curriculum deemed necessary for a well-rounded education, but were doing it "outside the classroom."

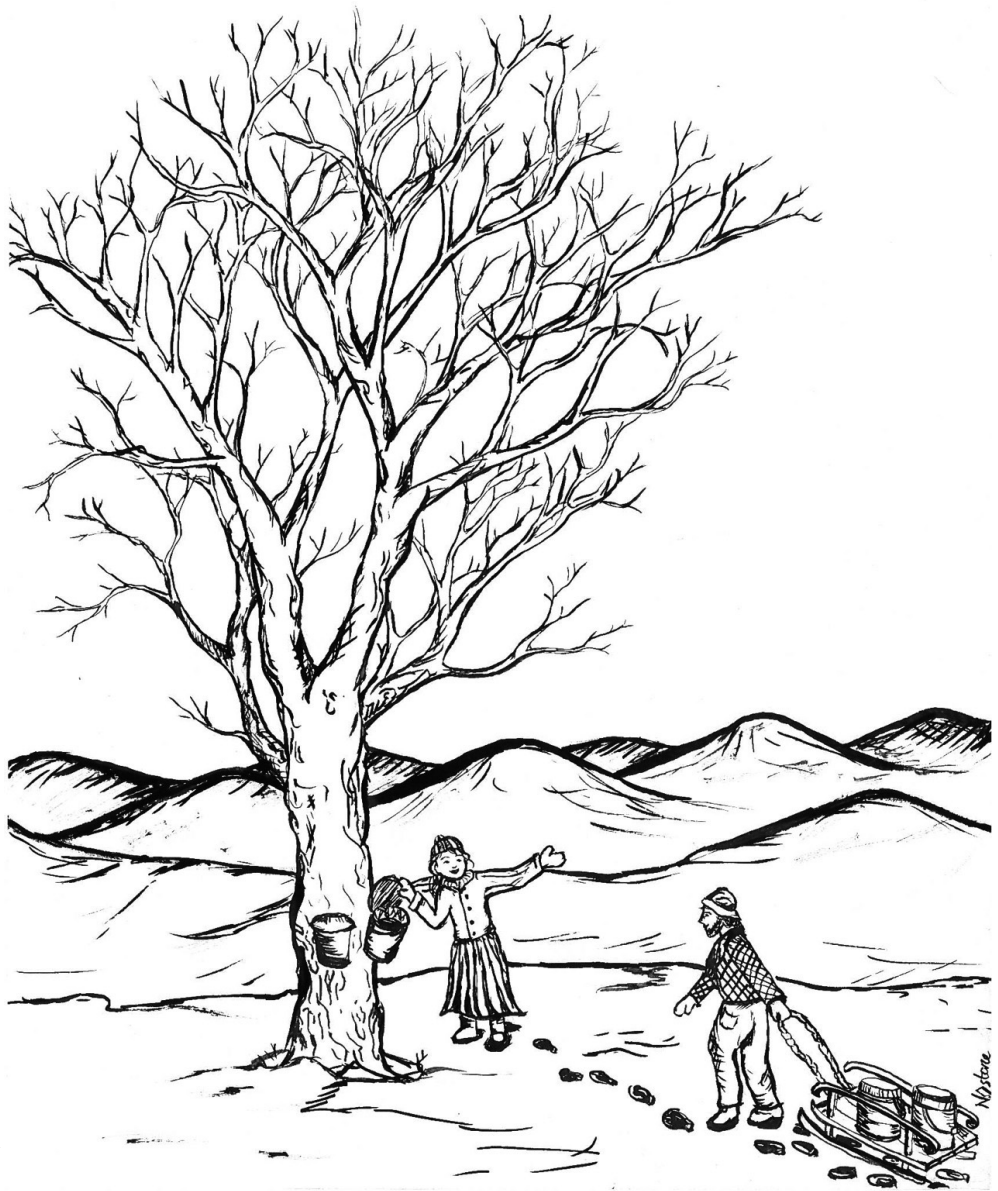
Back in my time (says the old geezer within me) there were school board-funded outdoor education centres liberally scattered across the southern portion of this province. Not so these days. A few remain, yes, but most are on life support in regards to funding.

So how are the students of today supposed to find out about nature, the environment and their vital part within all this? By being very fortunate to have one of the folks in the audience become their teacher. In the short time of my visit, I was impressed by the passion and knowledge these participants had for education and sharing in general, and outdoor experiences in particular.

Today, more people live in an urban area than a rural one, and lost is the intimate connection to the land and all it supports. My generation (once more says the old geezer) had good opportunity to live on or visit a working farm, run free in a pasture, hike unafraid in a deep dark woods. Not so today. It's a different world, and teaching methods have to be provided in new and different ways.

These young professionals are just the ones to do it. Not to say we elders should just step aside, rather we should step up and become mentors. Our experiences count, but we have to acknowledge that new technology is "where it's happening, my man."

I ended the presentation with a sincere congratulations to the gathered throng, thanking them for their commitment to teaching. They will have challenges within their chosen career, but if their resolve continues as was present in that conference room, they'll have little problem getting kids to step outside and get a bit of colour in their cheeks.



Outdoor education—the process of creating an environmentally aware, caring and healthy person, while dodging ambivalent school boards and hovering helicopter parents.

David J. Hawke is the Stewardship Program Manager for the Couchiching Conservancy land trust. He is an award winning outdoor writer, nature photographer and naturalist.

Listening to Nature's Voice

By Frank Glew

I was an outdoor educator for many years, actually more than I want to remember, but I somehow have never lost the passion for educating children about the natural world. Even now, 20 years into my retirement, I have not forgotten my roots. After writing 10 nature-themed picture books for children, I thought I was finished, but I was wrong. Mother Nature had other plans for me.

In the Spring of 2014 there were many scientific articles being published on colony collapse disorder and the resulting plight of honey bees. I read these articles with great interest and thought there was a dire need for a primary-junior level book about bees, pollination and the importance of both. But I was retired from writing, and so it was really only a thought. Yet to my surprise, I kept seeing bees and other pollinators everywhere I went. And each time I saw them, I felt that they were sending me a message. They filled my head while trying to sleep. Then something very strange happened. I discovered a large bee colony that had made itself at home on the side of my house. Then, not one, but unbelievably seven more pollinator hives, one at a time over the summer, set up residence around my small urban home. This was extremely irregular. Why did this happen? My neighbours had no bees. The bee message seemed very clear: "Be our voice." It seemed like something bigger was taking place. I finally paid attention to the signs and then got to writing! When the student is ready, the teacher will come.

For over two years I was consumed with writing this little book. I read everything about bees that I could get my hands on. I spoke with teachers, beekeepers, contacted entomologists at three universities, consulted with the Beekeepers Association, area farmers and manufacturers of pesticides. I helped in the maintenance of bee hives with a beekeeper to learn all I could. In writing this book, I had to dance around the pesticide issue, which



was the hardest part. I knew that anything too controversial might not go over well. I tried to assimilate all sides of the issue fairly, and after two years, *Melissa's Magnificent Message* was born.

My main character Melissa (meaning "honey bee" in Greek) is a wise and hardworking bee who discovers the real reason why bees are disappearing. Everyone needs to know about the importance of these little pollinators and the consequences of living without insect pollinators. Through her insight she solves this complex problem. The message I try to relate in this book is based on the familiar North American native proverb, "When the last tree is cut down, the last fish eaten, and the last stream poisoned, you will realize that you cannot eat money." The voice in the book is that of bees, beekeepers, Gaia and our children who will be dependent upon our present choices for their future sustainability.

The book is now published and I also created a teacher's curriculum guide to go along with it. I distributed the first 2,500 copies free-of-charge to educators, schools and outdoor education centres in Ontario and look forward to sharing it with many more.

Frank Glew has taught outdoor and environmental education to all grades from one to university. He has received 14 awards for his work, including the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal, 2002, and Ontario Nature's Richards Educational Award, 2006. He can be contacted at fsglew@kw.igs.net.

The Peaceful Forest and I

By Natasha Diamondstone-Kohout

I breath in.

The air is clear with sunshine, pure light
reflects off the fluffy snow.

The sky is a bright vibrant blue
a winter's day.

I start to climb,
my skies stick to the sun softened snow.
Alternating poles and skies I make my way
to the first plateau.

It is darker here
pine trees tower above me
blocking out the sun.

I glide along
silently
a mere visitor in this forest of calm.
Traffic noise from the busy highway is
gone.
Replaced by
a peaceful quiet only the woods
evoke.

I'm working up hill again.
My mouth dry,
my heart pulsing like a drum,
body hot.
Higher and higher I climb.

When I reach the top I pause and
look down,
the grooves my skis have made in the snow
wind their way up the hill
the memory of my ascent
clear to the eye.

My ski slips,
unexpectedly
I am forcibly startled out of my reverie
I fall backwards into the snow.

After the moment of surprise has passed
I relax into my wintery bed
I am comfortable here,
I close my eyes, focus on my breath,
On every cell in my body that is
dancing
with life.

A Woodpecker calls from the trees
drawing my attention away from my self,
to the rest of the world,
to the shadows that crisscross along the
snowy ground,
to the patch of sun hitting my face,
to the light breeze blowing through the
trees
that causes the crisp brown Beech leaves to
rattle.

Finally, I sit up
ready to continue my
journey.

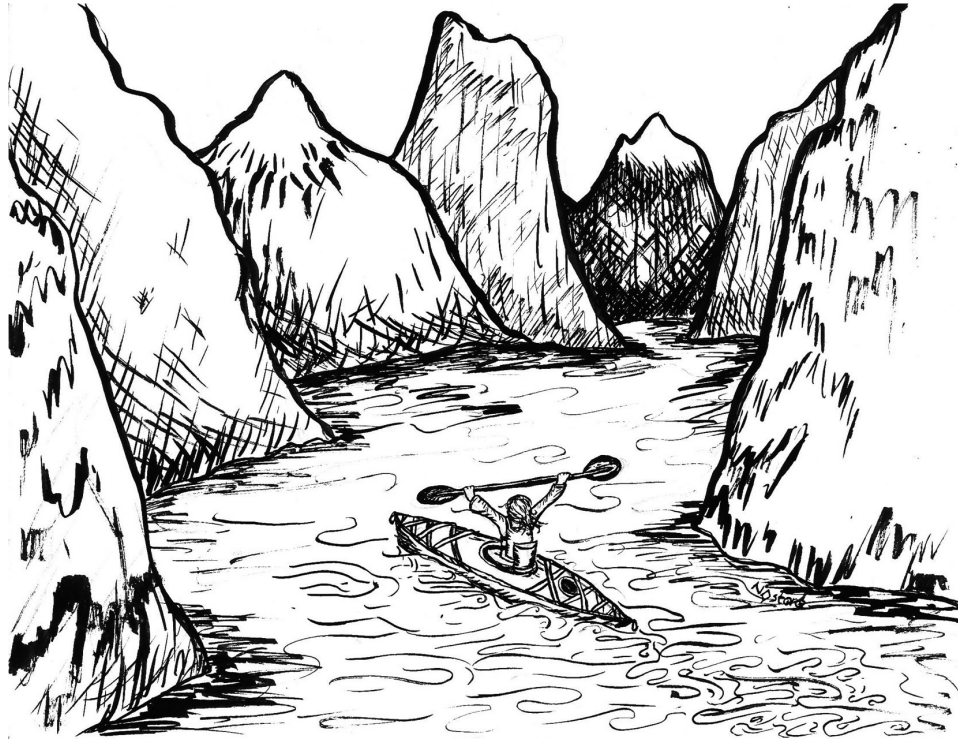
I'm up onto my skies
sliding through the crystalline snow.

A trail of Deer tracks merge with the
snowshoe trail I am following,
it's hard to imagine anyone else venturing
through these woods
before me
everything is so still.

High above my head a light breeze flutters
through the tree tops
causing a Hemlock branch,
heavy with the burden of snow to be
shaken
A spray of snow catches the wind and
sparkles
in the sun as it falls to the ground.

An obstacle appears in my path
a stream,
flowing from the Beaver Pond.
It is sunken deep into the snow.

Carefully,
tentatively,
making sure to avoid the disaster of moist
skis
I stretch one leg forward, my right ski is
now planted on the other bank
I am straddling the stream.
I stick both my poles into the snow
next to my far ski.
Now it's my left leg's turn
I lift it over the water, but the tip is



unruly, it catches on the snow
I tumble
safely
onto the opposite bank.

Snow fiercely stings my bare wrists.
It melts quickly,
transforming into liquid
that slides down my sleeve.

I jab both poles on either side of myself
and get to to my feet
then parallel my skies,
brushing off the snow.

Out of my red snow suit pocket comes a
Maple Syrup flask of water.
It slides down my throat,
quenching a thirst
I didn't realize I had.

I look about myself.
The mountain,
which always seems to tower above me
now seems
small.

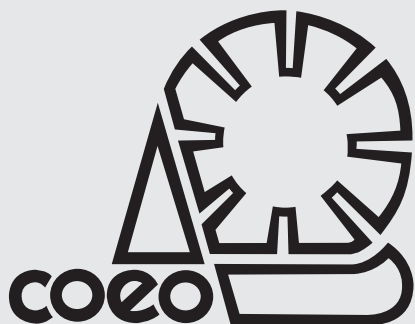
I am as tall as the trees.

Ahead of me is the downward slope
that I climbed, earlier.
Its steepness sings out to me
teasing,
"Are you ready?"
it asks,
"Ready for the rush of wind, as you fly
unstoppable through this silent forest?"

I give a respectful nod to the playful hill.

I put my left foot forward and give a
mighty
Push
with my poles.
The Woods smile back at me
as I let out a "Whoop" of joy
and slide down the hill as fleetly as the
Wind.

Natasha Diamondstone-Kohout is a teenager from Southern Vermont. She enjoys hiking, canoeing (in her father's homemade birch bark canoes), literature, marine biology and everything else life has to offer. Her homeschool experience is culminating with a semester in Ecuador with Kroka Expeditions, a community-based outdoor adventure and service program, which she is sincerely looking forward to.



The Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario

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Please visit our website at www.coeo.org/membership.htm
for more detailed descriptions of the benefits of each
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Please print and fully complete each line below.

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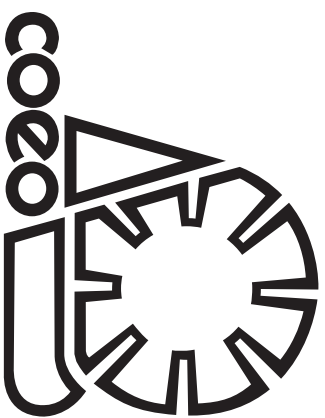
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