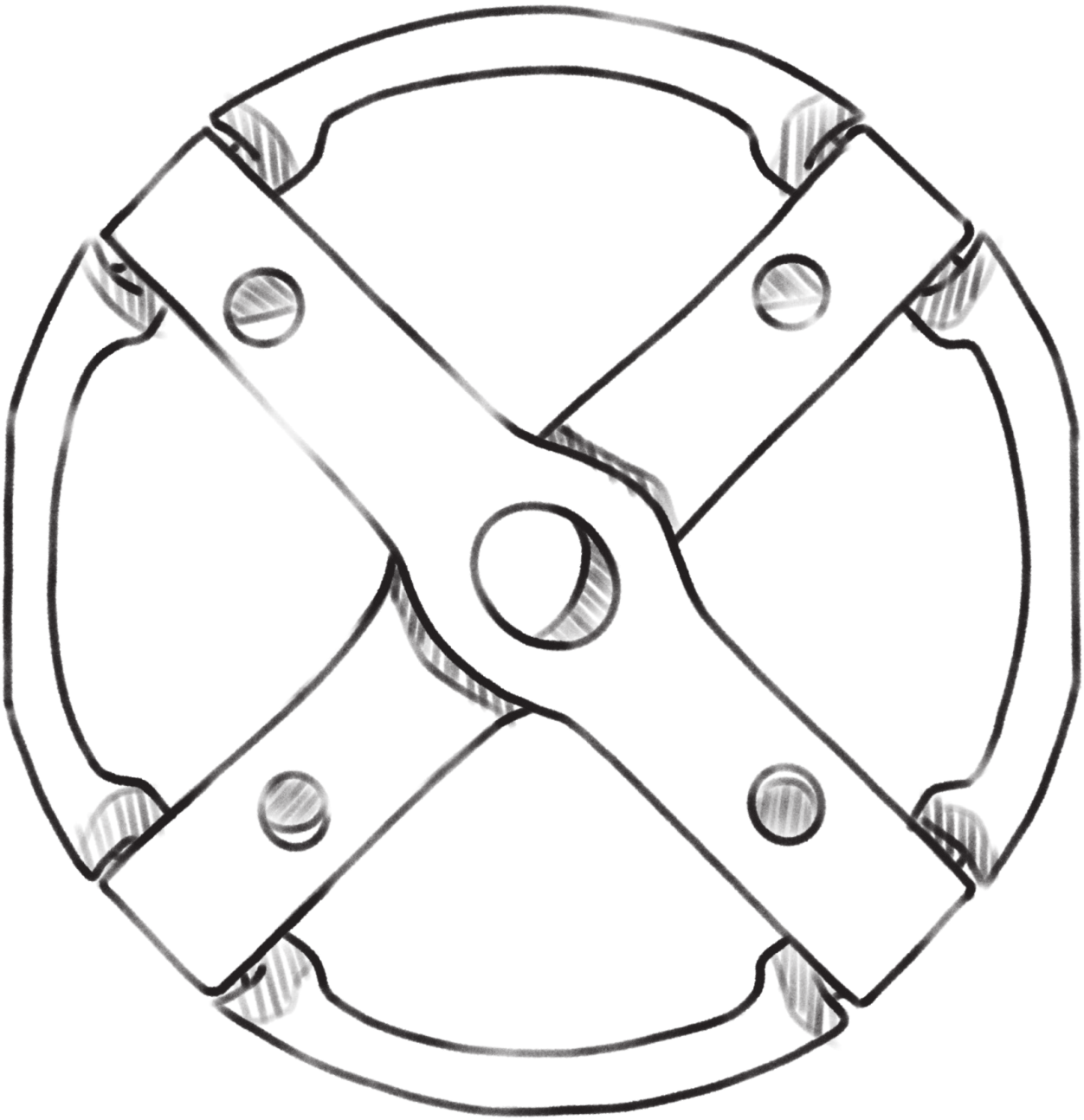
Pathways

THE ONTARIO JOURNAL OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION
Winter 2023, 36(2)



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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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Pathways is always looking for contributions. Please contact the Chair for submission guidelines.

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Editor's Log

This issue of *Pathways* opens with a revealing article, wherein the author, Simon Priest, unravels the development and usage of the concept of comfort zone, within adventure education. Priest explains why it is important for practitioners to move beyond a common, and often too simplistic, understanding of the comfort zone model, to a deeper and more nuanced approach. He presents an evidence-based mechanism, which includes the ideas of optimal arousal, dissonance, and competence effectance. *Pathways* readers who work in the area of adventurous outdoor learning will undoubtedly take much away from this article, and find themselves immediately reflecting on past and current practice. Next, and staying on a closely related topic, Jim Cain and Shawn Moriarty explore adversity within adventure education and examine many of the essential attributes groups and group members must possess in order to confront and overcome challenging obstacles. The authors share the accounts of some historic expeditions and the characteristics of some notable leaders, and in concluding, present a philosophical conundrum to readers.

Next, readers will find a study conducted by Anne Corkery that focused on the links between a gardening project and student sense of community at school. The author explores school gardens as an opportunity for student and nature connection, wellbeing, and experiential learning that connects directly to the Ontario curriculum at all grade levels. We then hear from Linda Leckie and Bob Henderson. Linda reflects on time spent on the winter trail, and the mentors, guides, peers and student participants who taught her so much along the way, while Bob, *Pathways* Resource Editor, looks at the role of the morning meeting on canoe trips. This issue ends with some WILD WORDS courtesy of author and poet Tim Bowling. Tim generously shares four poems from his latest collection, *In the Capital City of Autumn*. It should be noted here that, with the assistance of artist Kainat Ahmed, the *Pathways* design team has (hopefully) found a solution to an irksome problem that has plagued our pages for many years: how we might best publish poems, which stylistically do not conform with our narrow, two-column format. Kainat has provided an answer in the form of an illustrated open book frame that will allow us to cheat and share poetry in its original form. Thanks to both Kainat Ahmed and Karen Labern for their time and effort in figuring this out, and readers, please let us know what you think!

Kyle Clarke
Editor

Sketch Pad – The art for this issue of *Pathways* was generously contributed by Kainat Ahmad. Drawing from a traditional fine arts background, Kainat's digital creations are firmly rooted in the principles of composition, colour theory, and proportion. Her artistic expression is deeply influenced by the vibrant hues and unconventional forms of 1970s retro design. Exploring themes of eclecticism and maximalism, Kainat's work presents a striking contrast to her own minimalist way of life. At present, Kainat works as a freelance illustrator, having collaborated with esteemed clients including Adobe, The Globe and Mail, Shoppers Drug Mart, and Avalanche.

Instagram: @kainat.png
Website: https://kainatahmad.com

President's View

Author Ali Smith said in her book *Winter*, "That's what winter is: an exercise in remembering how to still yourself then how to come pliantly back to life again." As a COEO community this January, we were fortunate to gather for both shared stillness and revival at another stellar Make Peace with Winter conference.

This inspiring conference, Weaving Warmth, truly did intertwine a beautiful combination of heartfelt reunions, motivational workshops, an engaging keynote, and countless moments of connection with each other on fresh snow and cozy couches, and while skiing. Camp Kawartha graciously hosted us again at their exceptional environmental and outdoor education centre.

"Thank you" really isn't enough when it comes to sharing gratitude for the dedication and many hours the MPWW Conference Committee team poured into this special weekend. From countless calls, emails, and planning sessions beforehand, to the hands-on work throughout the weekend, the magic of Make Peace was cultivated with the hard work of many. The conference's organization and heart stemmed from board members and phenomenal Co-Chairs Valerie Freemantle and April Nicolle. Admirable teamwork is commended from the committed conference team: Billie Jo Reid, Karen O'Krafka, Claire Kemp, Angel Suarez Esquivel, Tammy Hand, Kim Squires, Hil Coburn, Kim Barton, Starlene Ruttan and Ben Blakey.

There are a handful of extraordinary humans that made the weekend even more powerful. *Miigwetch* to Elder Peter Schuler for his guidance, friendship, and wisdom in continually supporting our individual and collective work towards reconciliation. Thanks to our influential keynote speaker Laura McPhie; we were enlightened by her lived experiences within outdoor education spaces and are inspired by her calls to action. From presentations on winter wildlife tracking, Nanabush, cooking with fire, birch bark fairy baskets, listening to lichen, weaving Indigenous knowledge and western science and beyond… Our gratitude runs deep for these inspiring professional development sessions woven together with such passion and expertise.

Lastly, the conference wouldn't have run or been as dynamic as it was without each of the attendees! This organization continues to be a volunteer-led heartbeat within outdoor ed because of the vitality and engagement of our members.

The COEO Board of Directors have been busy collaborating and working on COEO initiatives through the fall and winter. We have created subcommittees this year to help channel our long-range planning and short-term goals. The Bursary and Grant Committee has been working away on making COEO conference attendance equitable and inclusive for all emerging and diverse outdoor educators in Ontario. The Mentorship Committee has been creating new avenues to support members' development and growth. The Award Committee is creating a new COEO award that will honour those promoting inclusivity and diversity within outdoor education in Ontario. Keep an eye out for new benefits to being a COEO member coming your way, as the Membership Benefits Committee has been getting creative and collaborating to bring new added value to being part of COEO.

It continues to be my honour and pleasure to serve as your COEO president this year, especially with the teamwork and great energy of this hard working, active and hands-on board of directors! Thank you to each board member for your countless hours of critical thinking, volunteer work and dedication to making COEO the outstanding organization that it is. It's with excitement that we invite you to learn and adventure with us at Camp RKY for COEO's fall conference September 20-22nd, 2024!

As days grow longer and we look ahead to a new season, I invite you to enjoy the last of the stillness in winter, and revel in the joys that crisp air, fresh snow, and a warm cocoa in hand can bring.

Hilary Coburn
President

Beyond the Comfort Zone

By Simon Priest

The comfort zone is a widely used pseudoscience model with widespread and possibly inappropriate application in adventurous outdoor learning. The term was initially coined with respect to body temperatures and thermal comfort conditions for British household heating in the 1920s (Fishenden, 1926). However, it has since been commonly and extensively used in the zeitgeist from Bardwick's (1991) writing in her book, *Danger in the Comfort Zone*. This text was about entitlement habits in business, and not about uncertainty in adventure, as the unaware outdoor reader might assume.

The term first showed up in education with one very early mention regarding a pilot program using "adventuresome and occasionally stressful activities [where] each student found [them]self at some point beyond [their] comfort zone" (Martin, 1976, p. 14). The first conventional adventure-related appearance of the term was at the 23rd Annual International Conference of the Association for Experiential Education, where presenters in several workshops made mention of it (Frank, 1995). From there, it took off like a wildfire, finding itself in the lexicon of adventure practitioners around the world.

When consulted, the APA Dictionary did not define comfort zone or a state of being comfortable (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2023). However, a popular source (unfortunately, a publicly well adopted one) defined the comfort zone as "a familiar psychological state where people are at ease and (perceive they are) in control of their environment, experiencing low levels of anxiety and stress" (Wikipedia, 2023).

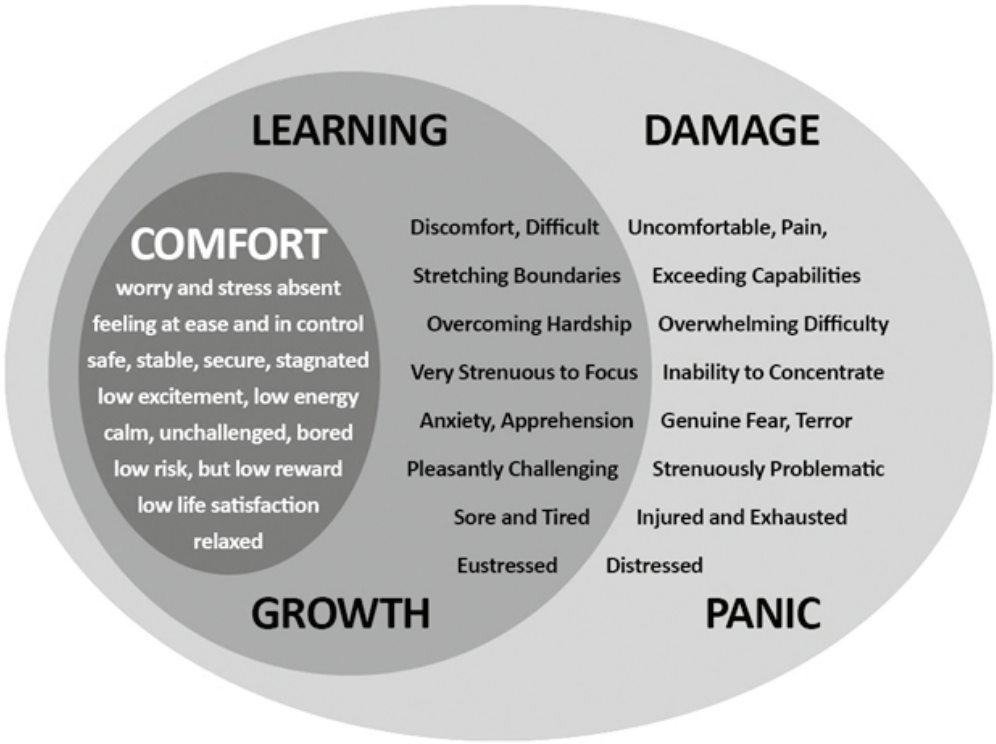


Figure 1: A compilation of general interest models for the comfort zone.

A quick scan of comfort zone models on the Internet (a great home for pseudoscience) showed multiple variations as summarized in Figure 1. A typical comfort zone model looked like a hard-boiled egg, cross sectioned in half, with three (or four) off-center ovals inside one another; each one was a different zone.

In the centre, the yolk was one's comfort zone, where people were at ease, relaxed, and in control. At the outer edge or shell was the damage/panic zone, where people can get harmed physically, socially, and psychologically. The white of the egg, or the learning/growth zone, lay in between, where people change or transform one or more of their feelings, while thinking, behaving, and resisting against help to heal from trauma or cope with life (Priest & Gass, 2018). Sometimes, this middle zone was further divided into separate learning and growth zones, where the division was due to distinguishing on the basis of education and human development. At times, the learning and growth zones swapped places for a few inferences on the Internet. Once in a while, some Internet model implications had the damage and panic zone as something that one needed to move through in order to get to the learning and growth, so all zones were switched around, but comfort was something to step outside so as to learn and grow.

Variations of this model seemed to be ubiquitous in adventurous outdoor learning (Brown, 2008). Such a model was frequently used to explain that participants would be moving from their comfort zones into places of learning and growth by personally and collectively taking perceived risks. For some adventure interpretations, those participants must move through fear in order to get there, while, for others, fear is well outside the place of education or human development and should not be visited at all. For either version, change required participants to step outside their comfort zones as is often heavily cited in some adventure-based literature (Leberman & Martin, 2002; Luckner & Nadler, 1997; Panicucci, 2007).

While this theory is an easy and effective way to present what practitioners do and how adventure works, the model has little substantiating evidence and does a disservice to the craft of the adventure profession. Part art and part science, the professional craft of adventurous outdoor learning is more subtle and complex than the simple egg model. This mechanism includes optimal arousal, dissonance, and competence effectance. A closer look at each is warranted to move beyond the comfort zone.

Optimal Arousal

The book that catapulted the comfort zone into the minds of millions positioned it as "a behavioural state within which a person operates in an anxiety-neutral condition, using a limited set of behaviours to deliver a steady level of performance" (White, 2008, p. 2). The author was encouraging employees to visit the nearby neighbour of comfort: the maximum performance zone. This was, and still is, a simple re-imagining of the Yerkes-Dodson Law (1908) regarding optimal arousal.

Optimal arousal is a condition where maximum performance occurs at the peak of an inverted U-shaped curve, as shown in Figure 2. Performance is poor when a person is under aroused (bored) or over aroused (anxious), but somewhere in between (different for each person) is a level of optimal arousal, where performance peaks at its best. This will also vary by the intricacy of the tasks being performed. For complex and difficult tasks, the curve will shift left and optimal arousal will be lower than average for that person, but for simple and easy tasks, the curve will shift right and optimal arousal will be higher than average (Yerkes & Dodson, 1908). The obvious takeaway for adventure practitioners is to seek out conditions that bring out the best in participants, but also to recognize that this will be different for each person. Therefore, practitioners sequence activities from simple and easy to complex and difficult, so that no one is rushed into a permanent state of over arousal and optimal arousal is reached for each participant. In this re-imagination, boredom or under arousal would be the comfort zone, anxiety or over arousal would be the damage/panic zone, and optimal arousal would be the learning/growth zone.

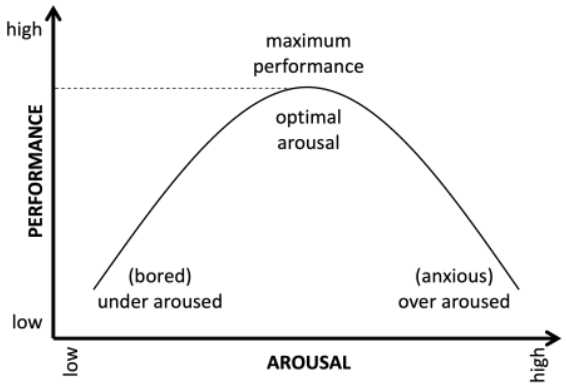


Figure 2: A representation of the Yerkes-Dodson Law (1908).

Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance is a state of mild distress experienced when contradictory information is present, usually two competing or opposing ideas held in a person's mind at the same time (Festinger, 1957). The first belayed climb to height that adventure participants make on a cliff face or ropes/challenge course brings up dissonance: "I'm safe, but I'm going to die!" Other examples of dissonance may be when a person is asked to do something that goes against their beliefs, doesn't feel quite right, or may seem unethical or illegal. More than having a conscience, dissonance creates uncomfortable confusion.

When faced with dissonance, people attempt to resolve the inconsistencies of both thoughts by taking actions to change their distressful (negative) feelings. This is an effort to reach a state of equilibrium and feel comfortable again. The actions they take have been called mastery attempts or practice tries.

If they are successful in their attempt to reach equilibrium, then eustressful (positive) feelings result and this reinforces the choices they made. So for the climbing participants, who may be frozen in fear, an adventure practitioner non-coercively encourages them to proceed. If they succeed without falling, then reflection processes like group discussions, solo contemplations, or facilitator conversations, help them to learn and grow from the success. However, if they experience setbacks by falling, then they get to practice and try again. Knowing the ropes held gives them new information to lessen the dissonance next time. Repeated mastery attempts eventually bring success and reflections confirm learning and growth.

Competence Effectance

Building on the work of White's (1959) effectance motivation theory, and Harter's (1978) competence motivation theory, Klint (1992) proposed her competence effectance theory. "Competence effectance refers to the belief that personal competence (if correctly perceived) will increase a participant's chance of success in an adventure experience and grow their newfound perceived competence" (Mouse, 2023). Her work is based on the personal motivation of participants to test their situations, solve problems, and gain a sense of mastery that leads to improvements in correctly perceived competence (Klint, 1990). In challenges, participants who correctly perceive their competence will know what perceived risks to take.

Figure 3 consists of two loops on either side of a central switching area. The loops are positive and negative spirals, while the neutral switching area is the only way to change sides. The spirals have the same steps, but one is the opposite or reversal of the other. For example, for adventure participants, success (or failure) is followed by positive (or negative) feedback from themselves and others in their group. This good (or bad) feedback increases (or decreases) their perceived competence and motivation. They become bored (or anxious) and under aroused (or over aroused) with the same challenge or level of perceived risk. So, in the next activity, they select a greater (or lesser) challenge and perceived risk. If they perform sufficiently (or insufficiently) with that new challenge, then the spiral continues upward (or downward) until a practitioner intervenes to help participants change sides. The four numbers (1, 2, 3 and 4) in Figure 3 correspond to the four techniques

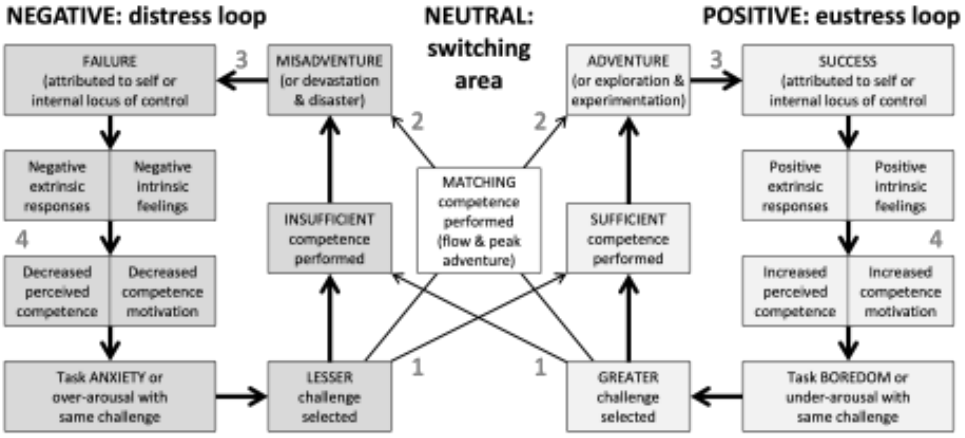


Figure 3: A model of the competence effectance theory.

that practitioners frequently use to help participants change sides or at least to alter their competence perceptions.

1. When participants believe they have performed insufficiently, and are destined to remain in the negative loop, a practitioner can alter their perceptions to become sufficient and vice versa. The practitioner simply has a private conversation with participants and shares that others have perceived participants' performances differently in order to get them to switch sides.

2. Similarly, a practitioner can help participants to switch sides by skipping over the process of their performance to examine the product of their actions. When participants think they have experienced a misadventure, the practitioner can help them see the experience as adventures, and vice versa. The practitioner simply has another private conversation and shares the positives or negatives that the participants may have missed in determining the outcomes.

3. When it comes to successes or failures (temporary setbacks), these can be mediated by practitioners by using attribution theory. Participants crediting or blaming themselves (internal locus of control) can be helped to see external contributions to success or failure. A practitioner discusses the equipment or weather as alternate attributions to explain success or failure.

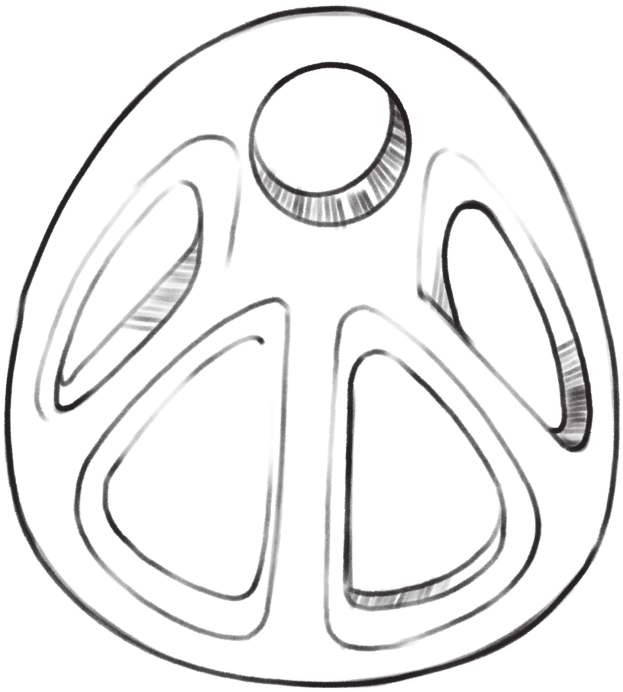
4. The practitioner can also have a powerful influence over how extrinsic and intrinsic feedback is accepted or rejected by participants and can also assist them to modify their perception of personal competence and motivation. A practitioner merely discusses the impact of external criticism or false compliments, the influence of internal "stinking thinking," the ego-check, and how they envision themselves in terms of confidence and skills.

A Mechanism of Change

Put all of this together and the first half of a mechanism of change for adventurous outdoor learning arises. The second half is reflection and its subsequent steps toward transformation.

In the first half, dissonance is created from the contrasting, novel, or unusual situations common to adventure programs (Gass et al., 2020). Repeated practice tries or mastery attempts lead to success or to failure (a temporary setback) and competence effectance can be used to adjust these perceptions.

The second half is bathed in reflection: private conversations between a participant and a



practitioner, group discussions guided by the practitioner's questions, and/or solo time to contemplate on one's own. Topics for consideration include intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships, success and failure. By examining their feeling, thinking or behaviour in the context of the adventure and by comparing those present processes to past ones, participants can discover new ways from mistakes, become aware of the need to change, make alterations, and identify gains in perceived competence. All of these comprise learning and learning leads to change, as long as reflection is correctly facilitated so that participants accept ownership of their changes and follow through (Priest et al., 2022). Reflection usually ends with promises to change in the next activity (whether or not these are demonstrated and reflected upon) or with pledges to do things differently upon pending return to daily life at home, school or work. Transfer of changes to daily life is enhanced through the conscious use of metaphor (Bacon, 1983; Gass, 1985).

Conclusion

The comfort zone model is outdated and insufficient to explain the intricacies of adventurous outdoor learning. Our profession does a disservice to itself every time one of us answers, "I get kids out of their comfort zone" when asked to explain adventure learning. Furthermore, "what I am cautioning against is the use of the comfort zone as a model for learning that is used as…the justification for intentionally engineering or 'cooking up' situations to place students outside their comfort zone" (Brown, 2008, p. 10). This leads to manufactured risks or consequences that slide quickly into the damage/panic zone.

Instead, when asked "what is adventure learning?", we should answer with something like this: "I create dissonant learning opportunities for kids and carefully facilitate the transformation of their feelings, thoughts, and behaviours." By doing so, we show the disciplines that have marginalized us that we have a clear understanding of a sophisticated transformation process. In all likelihood, this will be clearer than many of the processes now at work in education, psychology, and social work disciplines.

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After his tenure as a university professor of adventurous and environmental outdoor learning in Ontario, Simon Priest was a dean, provost, vice-chancellor, senior vice president, president, commissioner, and advisor to a minister of education. He has received numerous awards and accepted over 30 visiting scholar positions around the world in outdoor learning.

Overcoming Adversity: A Key Element of Any Expedition

By Jim Cain and Shawn Moriarty

Visit any library or bookstore and you can find hundreds of accounts of expeditions to every corner of the earth. Some of these adventures went off the rails, almost from the very start. Others managed to overcome serious obstacles along the way. Only a precious few actually succeeded in their quest. But try as you might, you are unlikely to come across any expedition that didn't experience some level of hardship and adversity along the way. Weather conditions, navigational errors, shortages of critical resources, crew rebellions, famine, disease, equipment failures, hostile environments, accidents and injuries, even something as simple as the loss of a horse can and did have a dramatic effect on the outcome of an expedition—just ask Truman Everts from the first expedition to Yellowstone.

"No food, no fire, no means to procure either, alone in an unexplored wilderness, one hundred and fifty miles from the nearest human abode, surrounded by wild beasts and famishing with hunger. This was no time for despondency."
—Truman C. Everts, *Thirty-Seven Days of Peril*

What all expeditions have in common is that eventually they all experience adverse conditions that impact the successful completion of their quest. John Franklin and his crew were severely compromised by poorly canned food supplies. Shackleton's ship the *Endurance* was crushed by shifting ice in the Antarctic. Wagner Dodge's crew of smokejumpers suffered a stream of small, innocuous setbacks that by themselves seemed harmless but soon became a tragic causation chain of events.

"Franklin's expedition carried within it hidden flaws that the arctic region would come to exploit. It is a region where the slightest error can be fatal."
—Richard Parry, *Trial by Ice*

In some expeditions, minor events had minor consequences that went almost unnoticed. In other expeditions, even tiny errors were amplified to the point where they seriously affected both the crew's performance and the outcome of the expedition itself.

We share these things not to suggest that all expeditions are flawed, but rather to suggest that the ability to confront adversity and to persevere despite adversity are worthy characteristics of any member of an expedition's crew. Author Michael Smith suggests as much when he wrote about Tom Crean, a member of both Shackleton's and Scott's Antarctic expeditions and the unsung hero of both because of his tenacity, perseverance and positive attitude despite seemingly insurmountable hardships. If more expeditions had had a Tom Crean-like member as part of their crew, we suspect that many more of them would have ended successfully.

For more information about the eternally optimistic Antarctic explorer Tom Crean, see the books: *Hold Fast* by David Hirzel, *Crean: The Extraordinary Life of an Irish Hero* by Tim Foley, and *Tom Crean: An Illustrated Life* by Michael Smith.

In the book *The Adversity Quotient*, author Paul Stoltz suggests that the ability to turn obstacles into opportunities is a hallmark of the kind of people you want on your expedition. In many ways, the challenges and adversities experienced on an expedition makes that expedition memorable, unique and perhaps even historically significant. And what are the qualities deemed most valuable for expedition members? Many are as varied as the expeditions themselves, but consider the following three collections from experts in the expeditionary world.

"For scientific discovery, give me Scott; for swift and efficient travel, give me Amundsen; but when you are in a hopeless situation, when there seems to be no way out, get on your knees and pray for Shackleton. Incomparable in adversity, he was the miracle worker who would save your life against all the odds, long after your number was up. The greatest leader that ever came on God's earth, bar none."
—Sir Raymond Priestley of Shackleton's Nimrod Expedition

When Shackleton advertised for crew members for his Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition, he received more than five thousand applications, which he sorted into three drawers in his desk labelled: Mad, Hopeless and Possible. From the drawer of possibilities, Shackleton carefully selected a unique collection of expedition members. According to the books written about Sir Ernest Shackleton (and there have been many), Shackleton appreciated certain qualities in his expedition members, including imagination, teamwork, optimism, flexibility, loyalty, the ability to learn from mistakes, courage, respect, patience, inspiration, the ability to lead by example, and the ability to focus not on the present situation, but on the future yet to come. It was these qualities and perhaps many more that enabled Shackleton and his crew to endure what many consider one of the most difficult expeditions of all time.

"When individuals are forced to work together in difficult scenarios, their best as well as their worst qualities come shining through.
—Martin Dugard, *The Explorers*

In his book *The Explorers*, author Martin Dugard suggests that there are seven unique traits common to explorers far and wide. These include (in ascending order): curiosity, hope, passion, courage, independence, self-discipline and perseverance. Dugard goes on to suggest that successful explorers often possessed physical and mental attributes that unsuccessful explorers lacked.

"In reading about cases in which people survived seemingly impossible circumstances, I found an eerie uniformity. I distilled those observations down to a collection of behaviors and thought processes that survivors employ when in mortal danger.
—Laurence Gonzales, *Deep Survival: Who Lives, Who Dies and Why*

And finally, author Laurence Gonzales writes in his book, *Deep Survival: Who Lives, Who Dies and Why*, twelve attributes of survivors, including: that they perceive and believe, they stay calm, they think, analyze and plan, they take correct decisive action, they celebrate small successes along the way, they are grateful, they maintain a playful spirit and use their minds in positive ways, they see beauty around themselves, they believe they will succeed, they persevere, they do whatever is necessary and they never, never give up.

Each of these attributes, behaviours and qualities are valuable not only on an expedition, but in the real world as well, and they continue to serve expedition members long after the memory of their explorations have passed. For these reasons and many more, we believe it is appropriate and perhaps even necessary to set challenges before a group that will help them to develop resiliency, tenacity, fortitude and perseverance. Such experiences, we believe, make teams better, stronger and provide them with a richer experience than one in which every task is

easily conquered without struggle or effort. It is also, as history has proven time and time again, a frequent component of nearly every expedition ever launched.

Consider, for example, the following short story of an expedition that experienced no adversity whatsoever:

Bob and his crew went on an expedition. They were successful. The end.

Without some level of adversity on an expedition, there isn't much to tell. To paraphrase the words of Frederick Douglass, if there is no struggle, there is no progress. Expeditions that fail to challenge the members of their expedition party are little more than pleasant walks in the woods. Even Tuckman, during his creation of the stages of group development (1965), realized that struggle (in the storming stage) is a natural and essential part of the development of any group.

So, don't be afraid that your expedition may occasionally contain challenges and elements of adversity. It is precisely because of these things that the members of your expedition party will grow, acquire new skills and learn to persevere. And if no member of the expedition party possesses or provides these essential qualities and characteristics, then responsibility for these falls squarely on the shoulders of the expedition leader.

Figure 1: McClure's work in Antarctica included acoustic research in ice integrity.

Lessons Learned from a Recent Expedition to Antarctica

When Glenn McClure was accepted to join a National Science Foundation expedition to McMurdo Station in Antarctica, his first response was, "what the hell have I gotten myself into?" But that experience gave him perspective that he never would have realized while safe at home in upstate New York. He suggests that visiting Antarctica is as close as you can get to visiting another planet without leaving this one, and that those accepting the challenge positioned

themselves to move from the comfort and familiarity of their homes to a substantially less comfortable and unfamiliar location. Such is the life of an expedition member at the bottom of the earth.

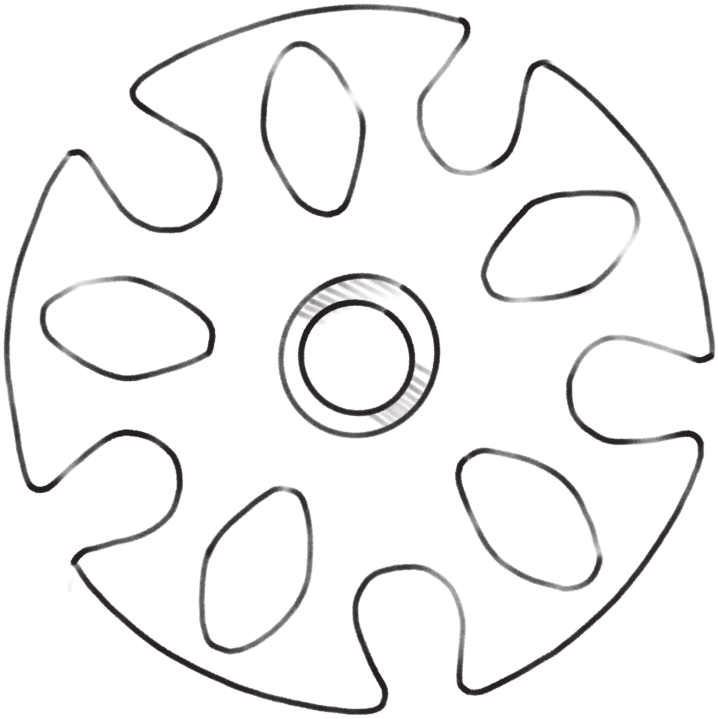
McClure learned to work as part of a team in Antarctica. It wasn't just a nicety, it was a necessity for survival. Perhaps the most significant commentary from McClure after his return, was this realization:

"Antarctica lacks nearly all the standard reference points in comparison to other parts of the world. Time has no meaning as the sun is visible for weeks at a time. The date too is irrelevant as you move from McMurdo Station to Yesterday Camp, which is beyond the international date line. In some parts of Antarctica, the geography is essentially flat, leaving no point of reference in the snow-covered terrain, and when you are standing near the south pole, ALL compass directions are north Worst of all, the color of the snow blends with the bleak clouds of the sky leaving no indication of the horizon, so you literally don't know where you are, when you are, what time it is and what direction you are facing. There is no reference point–and that's why you need a team!"

McClure, at least, was well prepared and well provisioned for his expedition to Antarctica. In comparison, a hundred years earlier, Shackleton and his men, though exceedingly well provisioned, were committed professionals, experienced, capable, competent, talented, well trained, hard working, prepared, healthy, optimistic, rested, ready... and they still failed. And why? Because they experienced a level of adversity greater than that for which they were prepared.

"Whilst Shackleton never achieved his personal dream of being the first to reach the South Pole, his reputation as a leader of men is based on a still greater success–the survival and safe return of all his team members, whilst overcoming almost unimaginable odds. Shackleton's name lives on as a synonym for courage, bravery and most of all, leadership."
—Henry Worsley, Captain of *The Endurance*

Even in failure, Shackleton is revered for his ability to safely return every member of his crew, despite overwhelming odds and an ongoing series of hardships and disappointments.



In contrast to both Glenn McClure's recent Antarctic expedition and that of Sir Ernest Shackleton, we suggest that you read *In the Kingdom of Ice: The Grand and Terrible Polar Voyage of the USS Jeannette* by Hampton Side, *The Ice Master: The Doomed 1913 Voyage of the Karluk* by Jennifer Niven, *Trial by Ice: The True Story of Murder and Survival on the 1871 Polaris Expedition* by Richard Parry, or *Ghosts of Cape Sabine: The Harrowing True Story of the Greely Expedition* by Leonard Guttride. And these accounts are only four of the many, many expeditions that experienced hardship and incredible adversity.

Learning from Failure

"Character consists of what you do on the third and fourth tries."
—James A. Michener

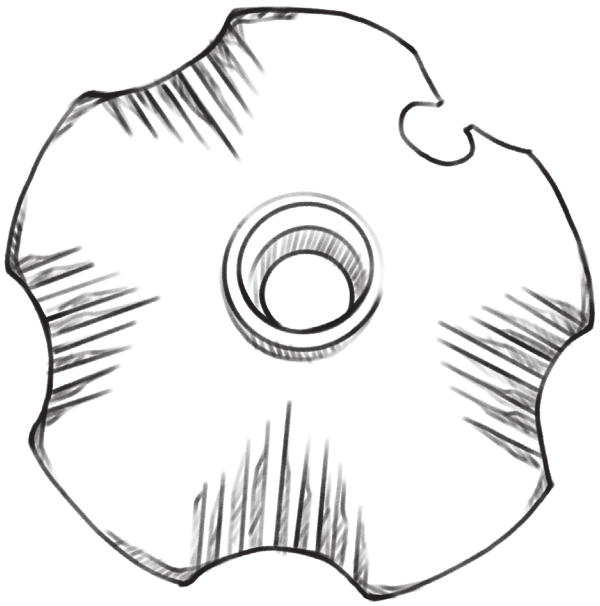
It's been said that it's what you do after you fail that really counts. And until we fail, we

truly don't know the limits of our abilities.

By their nature, adventure education activities are designed to challenge, inspire and encourage groups to explore their ability to work and play together. Occasionally this means that some individuals and groups may meet the upper limits of their abilities. They may experience failure, but learning how to recover from failure is as important as learning how to deal with success. The ability to try multiple times and to keep trying are both valuable expedition and life skills. Inventor Thomas Edison didn't stop the first time his incandescent light bulb concept failed.

It is not uncommon for a facilitator to want their groups to succeed, but it can be even more valuable for a facilitator or expedition leader to help their group gain all they can from an experience, even when they fail.

To explore the concept of learning from failure, see the books *Failing Forward: Turning Mistakes into Stepping Stones for Success* by John Maxwell, and *Sometimes You Win, Sometimes You Learn* also by John Maxwell.



A Philosophical Conundrum

As we conclude this article on overcoming adversity, let us propose a philosophical conundrum for you to consider.

To adequately prepare expedition members for the future and to gain the most value from an adventure education experience, the expedition party should be exposed to challenges that are: A: greater than, B: equal to, or C: less than those they are likely to encounter on a daily basis.

Shawn and I concede that there are valid arguments for each of the above possibilities. Personally, I would not heap more adversity onto the members of an expedition party unless they have proven their ability to turn such adversity into something positive and of great value. Challenges that pull a team together are ideal. Challenges that cause a group to fall apart are not.

Conversely, and according to Tuckman's theory of group development, as groups progress, they achieve higher and higher levels of performance. Learning how to overcome adversity and deal with conflict are valuable team skills and essential to the continued growth of a group. In adversity, there indeed lies opportunity.

The answer to this conundrum then lies within your own personal philosophy related to the level of challenge appropriate for the members of your expedition party. Don't be afraid of a little adversity along the way. Wisely presented, it can make the difference between a mere walk in the woods and a truly memorable expedition.

Some Words of Wisdom on Adversity

"All the really cool stuff happens outside your comfort zone."

"How much fun would life be if everything was easy?"
—Tracey Gaslin

"To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."
—Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Ulysses

"Our deepest fear is not that we are weak. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure."
—Nelson Mandela

"In 1870, Truman Everts went on a Yellowstone Expedition. He got lost two times then started a forest fire. So, of course, we offered him a superintendent job."
—US Forestry Service Historical Archives

"As (many) explorers have learned (some the hard way), it is only by getting lost in the wilderness that we find out who we truly are."
—Martin Dugard

"You wait. Everyone has an Antarctic."
—Thomas Pynchon

"Only those who risk going too far can possibly find out how far they can go."
—T.S.Eliot

"Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up."
—Thomas A. Edison

"The goal of a facilitator is not to help a group succeed, but rather to help a group learn as much as they can even when they fail."
—Jim Cain

"Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors."
—African Proverb

"Do just once what others say you can't do, and you will never pay attention to their limitations again."
—James Cook

"Fire is the test of gold; adversity of strong men."
—Seneca

"What lies before you and what lies behind you pales in comparison to what lies within you."
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

"One day, the years of struggle will strike you as the most beautiful."
—Sigmond Freud

"You need to get comfortable being uncomfortable."
—Jane Jeffries

"There is no education like adversity."
—Benjamin Disraeli

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Team-building guru Dr. Jim Cain is the author of 31 well-loved books filled with team and community building activities from around the world. His real-world, in-person train-the-trainer events are legendary in the adventure-based learning community and his virtual activities are used around the world. Jim's most recent books include Extraordinary Facilitation, The Teambuilders Toolbox, The Adventure Trail, *and* Print & Play.

Camp director, environmental educator and curious naturalist, Shawn Moriarty has been working with people in nature and creating learning communities since 1983. He is a regular presenter at camp and environmental education conferences, where he leads workshops on teaching ecological concepts in engaging ways and helping people develop deep connections to the natural world.

Growing Together: The Transformative Power of Student-Driven Gardens in Educational Environments

By C. Anne Corkery

I often chuckle when I think about the fact that my reputation as an educator has become centred around the fact that I seem to build school gardens wherever I go. Some see it as my thing, but in my mind, this thing found me. My interest has always been in promoting nature connection among my students. I seek to engage my students with the natural world, because I have experienced firsthand the benefits that time outdoors can have on a person. At the various schools I have taught, gardening seemed like a logical way to access this sense of nature connection while covering various parts of the curriculum. I have used gardening to cover topics related to science, mathematics, language arts, and health, and to simply reward my students for a job well done or to give them a break from the classroom.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the majority of Ontario students into their homes, limiting their opportunities for social interaction and engagement with curricular learning materials. Since the declaration of the end to the pandemic (United Nations, 2023) and the return of students to in-person learning, there has been a documented increase in reports of depression and anxiety among youth on a global scale (Oliveira et al., 2022; Radhakrishnan et al., 2022), and in Ontario, Canada specifically (Benton et al., 2022; Saunders et al., 2022). Furthermore, there are rising concerns regarding the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in combination with the ongoing climate crisis on the mental health of children (Lawrance et al., 2022). The results of a national survey (Schwartzberg et al., 2022) indicate that between 2019 and 2022, the percentage of Canadian students feeling empowered to act to reduce projected global warming rose from 29% to 39%. This leaves 61% of students feeling that there is nothing that can be done to reduce the predicted levels of global temperature rise that will surely bring increased hardship to millions of people all over the world. In lieu of feeling empowered to make a difference, these youth are reporting feelings of distress, helplessness and anxiety (Schwartzberg et al., 2022), to name a few. To counter these negative emotions and build resilient, empowered youth, it is important that schools focus on engaging students in projects that cultivate climate literacy and action, and engaging them in environmentally positive behaviours to inspire hope (Schwartz et al., 2022; Vergunst and Berry, 2022).

As we seek to find solutions to help our struggling youth whilst tackling the climate crisis, we must look to the most effective ways of doing so. In his seminal work, *Last Child in the Woods*, Richard Louv (2010) reminds us of the importance of nature connection for our mental health. He reminds us that regularly spending time in nature can decrease anxiety, depression, and help to mitigate the challenges linked to ADHD, among many other mental health challenges (Louv, 2010):

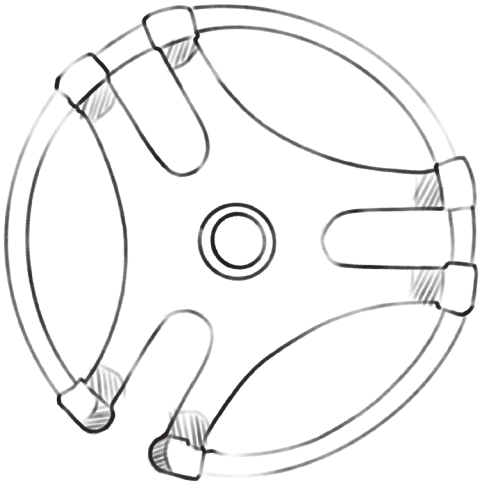
> Studies suggest that nature may be useful as a therapy for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), used with or, when appropriate, even replacing medications or behavioural therapies. Some researchers now recommend that parents and educators make available more nature experiences—especially green places-– to children with ADHD, and thereby support their attentional functioning and minimise their symptoms.

In 2023, Field and Howlett released a report on school board climate action

plans across Canada. The report states that of the 380 school boards in Canada, only ten have declared climate emergencies (five in Ontario and five in British Columbia), and only three have published climate action plans (two in Ontario and one in British Columbia). Despite the barriers that would need to be navigated in terms of infrastructure, transportation logistics and funding for example, there are some key items that schools and school boards could achieve with minimal pushback. For example, each school could very reasonably have an organic waste (compost) management program, a recycling program, and a school ground greening program. As a convenient aside, these are all projects that are part of Ontario's EcoSchools program (EcoSchools, 2024), which offers support to educators interested in initiating projects such as those in their schools. I often wonder why it is that I perceive so few educators stepping up to lead green initiatives such as gardens at their schools. It seems likely that these are seen as optional projects to be done in addition to the tasks that they are expected to accomplish throughout the day. It seems to me that few educators view these as projects to be done as curricular work with their students during the school day, and that is something I hope changes in the near future. School gardens are opportunities for nature connection, well-being, and learning that connects to each and every curricular subject at every grade level.

It is for these reasons that I chose to use a school garden project as the intervention aspect of this study. While engaging in the planning and construction of a community garden, students learn of the importance of local food systems in the context of the climate crisis (Sellman and Bogner, 2013), but also as a means of building healthy and strong communities (Austin, 2022). Psychological sense of community at school has previously been associated with decreased bullying (Vieno et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2014; Prati et al., 2018), academic achievement (Battistich et al., 1995; Wang et al., 2014; Prati et al., 2018), and engagement at school (Royal and Rossi, 1996; Prati et al., 2018). Further, in many cases, when student well-being is prioritized, we see an increased level of engagement at school (Phan et al., 2016).

In the winter of 2023, I entered an Ontario classroom as a learning consultant. My role was to support the implementation of a new mathematics resource, however when I met this bunch of students, I knew they needed more than mathematics support. After getting to know their teacher a bit more, it became evident that this group of students might benefit from a large dose of vitamin N (nature), as Richard Louv would say. We got to work, planning a garden project that would be largely student led. I will never forget one of the first sessions I spent working with this group of students. They had just been placed into groups based on the roles they were interested in filling for this project. The group of students tasked with creating and delivering presentations to their school's kindergarten classes was bouncing through the hallways. They could not get to the principal's office quickly enough to share their ideas.



Student: "Since we're making a sensory garden, I think the kindergartens will really like it."

Student: "It made me feel excited about the new things that we are going to learn about the garden, and also to help the kindergartens learn and that it would be very exciting for them. So it was exciting for me, because the kindergarteners would be excited to learn something new and be able to be a part of something."

The renewed sense of purpose I witnessed in these students was something to behold. It had taken both their classroom teacher and their principal by surprise. When I visit different classrooms and suggest projects akin to the one being described here, I am often met with hesitation from the classroom teacher. They often express doubt that their students could handle the agency that a student-led project of this nature requires. This lack of confidence in their students' abilities was concerning. We know that students entering their teen years are in need of opportunities that allow them to develop their autonomy, sense of agency, and independence (Patall et al., 2019). We are not born with these skills, and so we should not expect perfection on the first series of attempts. Schools should be safe places for our students to develop in these ways. Educators should focus more on creating the conditions necessary for students to feel safe making mistakes and trying again. Educators should not only be given opportunities to better understand this, but should also be given opportunities to develop their confidence in positioning themselves as co-learners with their students with an openness to rethinking their roles as educators. Understanding their roles such that they understand how to support their students and help them to access the tools that they need to accomplish their learning goals might be helpful when embarking on initiatives akin to this garden project. I was impressed with the level of engagement I witnessed from the majority of these students as they became more involved in the work and settled into their roles. One group of students was responsible for seeking the support of community partners, such as a local landscaping company, from whom they asked for lumber and soil donations. Before these students could make their request known, they were asked to write a script for their phone call and to make the call with teacher supervision. This group was positively buzzing with excitement as they were placed on hold while their request was being considered.

Me: "Did you have to make any phone calls or anything?"

Two students (excitedly): "Yes".

Student: "I made a phone call with a friend. And then all three of us made a phone call with her."

Student: "Normally when you make a phone call, you're calling your friends just to tell them they have to play a game or something. This one you actually called somebody you don't know."

Student: "And you had to use a script and it was just like…"

Me: "How did that feel?"

Student: "It felt pretty good doing it on your own with no parents telling you what to do."

Student: "Yeah, it was kind of awkward I think as we were waiting for them to get off hold on me and my friend, we were kind of laughing because we were so nervous. We were shaking and stuff. It took us a couple of minutes to get off hold though."

Student: "Yeah, maybe like five."

Me: "And how did it feel at the end of that call?"

Student: "It felt so good that we accomplished something we didn't think we would."

Student: "It was relieving because it took us a while to finish the script."

We see here the emergence of this sense of agency being something valued by students. Placing them in situations that are safe and yet nudging them ever so slightly outside of their comfort zone brings perceived benefits to their school experience. Regardless of whether we know of this important feature of learning or not, this can be difficult

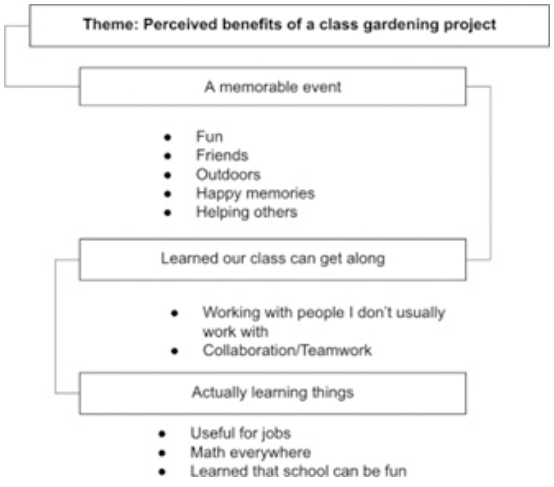


Figure 1: Categories that emerged from coded interviews, under the overarching theme of the perceived benefits of a class gardening project. There are three main categories and under each category are codes that emerged from interview transcripts. All categories and codes are direct quotes from the interviewees.

to do in a traditional classroom that values the banking model of education (Friere, 1970), and so worksheets often win over experience. Students need to perceive their sense of purpose in a learning experience before committing to it more fully (Hill et al., 2016), and this entails providing them with real-world experience where perhaps they are being asked to interact with other human beings. The sense that the success of a project hinges on the fulfilment of their respective roles is important as well. The students quoted above felt a great deal of agency because they knew that the acquisition of lumber for their garden hinged on the outcome of the phone call they were making, and they could not have been more invested.

One of the greatest challenges for this group of students was their apparent inability to work together, or to willingly work with those who they did not consider to be their friends. Part of my approach to project-based learning is a focus on building in opportunities for students to work with those they would not normally work with. Any of us with jobs understand that most of the time, we cannot choose our colleagues and so it is important that we have the ability to work with different people. This is why students were grouped according to their personal interests and not always according to who they wanted to work with.

Me: "Would you describe this garden project as a meaningful experience?"

Student: "Yeah."

Me: "What makes you say that?"

Student: "Um, because like, we're all working together. Well, we're all kind of friends in the class. And we're having some fun and stuff."

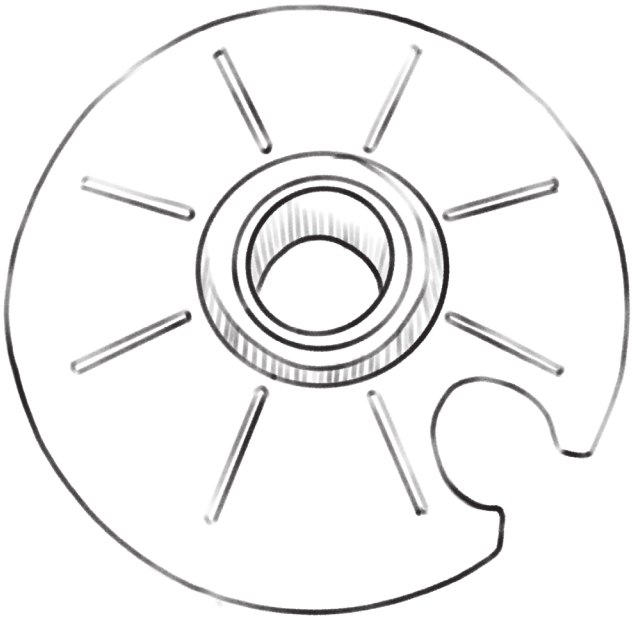
Student: "I work with the people that I don't usually work with, in like class and stuff and it helps me a bit, so if the teachers have to choose a group and you have worked with those people before, you know that you should be good working with them."

Student: "Yeah, it is. Because like, you do a lot of work. And when we were in the class, we had lots of collaboration, and we worked together and like, it's probably very meaningful, because we put a lot of work into it, into putting the dirt into the things (garden frames) and probably also putting the plants in."

Student: "This project is probably the only project that they [the students] actually work together."

This was interesting to me. Based on what these students are sharing here, they assign meaning to experiences that are fun and in which people are working together. As educators, it is up to us to create the environment in which students can grow to be effective collaborators. It seems that in this case, a sense of purpose and the opportunity to work with others were important determinants of student-perceived meaning and enjoyment.

Given the current mental health challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crises to students today, the results of this study present an interesting opportunity for educators, in that projects of this nature may be an effective tool for empowering students as responsible and caring citizens of their school communities. Previous studies have shown that when students have a sense of belonging and a known role to play within their communities, there is an overall increase in their well-being (Prati et al., 2018).



Student: "It makes you like, not worry, because when you're with people, you make memories with or by yourself, you're not thinking of the things that worry you and stress you out."

Intentionally engaging students in community-connected experiences in which they have agency, and helping them to make explicit connections between what they are doing and the overall benefit to their school or even global community may help to alleviate the mental health challenges currently plaguing many of our youth today and contribute to finding solutions to some of the world's problems.

Student responses imply that by and large, they enjoyed this project, it brought enjoyment to their school experience, and helped to foster collaboration with their peers (Figure 1). All but one student interviewed identified this garden project as a meaningful experience, and all students said that they would encourage other educators to complete a project like this with their students.

Me: "What advice would you give to other teachers thinking about doing this type of project with their students?"

Student: "They should totally do it because it's so much fun. And it'll teach them and the students will have so much fun and learn so much. It's a great experience for them, and they should totally do it. It's so much fun."

Student: "I would say, try it, because it means that your class will, like, come together, they'll learn to be a team."

They felt that this kind of project is beneficial to students in that it is fun and teaches them skills that would likely be valuable to them. Many of the students interviewed shared that the fun nature of the project came from the fact that it was outdoors and was something they were able to complete with their friends.

Me: "When you look out here at what we're doing today, would you describe that as a meaningful experience?"

Student: "Yeah, actually, it's really fun. I find doing anything outdoors is fun."

Me: "What was fun about this project?"

Student: "Well, we got to go outside and do stuff."
One student even shared that one of the things that made this project meaningful to them was the fact that it was going to help people in their community, which reflects this sense of purpose described earlier.

Me: "Okay, so the first question is,

how would you describe a meaningful experience? What does that mean to you?"

P: "An experience that helps people, it means a lot to people like, because like we're growing vegetables and stuff in it helps people be able to like feed other people."

Me: "How would you describe a meaningful experience? How would it feel? What kind of things would you be doing?"

P: "Well, maybe helping out? I don't know."

From the day I began working with this group of students, I witnessed much interpersonal conflict during each visit, prior to the beginning of this project. Students often appeared disinterested in learning material, and oppositional behaviour toward their teacher was a frequent, if not constant, occurrence. Other students commented on the common occurrence of arguments among their peers and the fact that only a small group of students ever did their share of the work in collaborative contexts. During an interview, one student remarked that they "like seeing them [the boys] actually doing the work instead of the girls doing it". This was during the building phase of the project, when students were outside filling the garden bed with soil and planting the seedlings. The girls seemed engaged in this project from the early stages, when writing emails to their principal, the neighbouring church, and making phone calls to local hardware stores and greenhouses asking for support with this project. Other groups of students were excited about preparing presentations for the school's kindergarten classes to teach them about this garden project. The students who were not engaged until the construction phase perhaps respond best to the instant gratification of their work, possibly due to higher levels of engagement with video games. Previous work has shown a correlation between a decrease in the attention span and increased impulsivity of students and the addiction to video games, especially violent ones (Gentile et al., 2012), with some studies finding that males represent the majority of gamers (Chen and Fu, 2009; Tak and Catsambis, 2023). It is possible that this observed lack of engagement until the construction stage of this project is a result of this relationship. What this reinforces to me is the need for increased hands-on, practical learning opportunities for all students.

Nine of the 14 students interviewed used terminology related to collaboration ("teamwork", "working together", "collaboration") in that this was a frequent occurrence during this project. Students had to work in a team setting at every step of the project. This is very interesting to me, because in my experience as a classroom educator, I have witnessed many of my colleagues using group work as a main pedagogical tool, only to become frustrated that only a few students seem to participate actively in this learning structure. I am curious about the context of this work and whether we need to look at the importance of providing students with tasks that require teamwork, rather than just any task and asking them to use teamwork to complete a task that does not necessitate this. In this project, for example, teamwork was beneficial in the building stage of the garden. It was necessary for two students to hold the sides of the garden together while I secured them in place. It was necessary to have multiple students carry the garden frame to its location in the schoolyard. Students were not comfortable making phone calls or sending emails alone, and often relied on their peers for feedback and moral support when completing these steps. One student also commented on the fact that they had learned that they can work well with students they do not typically work with, and suspected that this skill would be helpful to them in future teamwork contexts. In this project, students were placed into teams not based on their social dynamics, but based on their interests. For example, if a student expressed interest in making presentations for the kindergarten classes in their school, they were placed in teams with students expressing the same interest,

regardless of whether these other students were their closest friends.

The enjoyment that participating students felt while working with their peers on this project is not uncommon. It is reflective of what is often referred to as collective action, or participatory action as Salamon (2020) calls it. It is the coming together of people who share a similar set of values to work toward a common goal (Vamvalis, 2023). It is important that we leverage this affinity for working in community when we try to engage students and youth in actions to fight the ecological and climate crises. In other research I have completed, and in my conversations with students and pre-service teachers, there is a clear lack of understanding of collective action on climate change. When asked about the solutions to the climate or ecological crises, there is a clear emphasis on individual action (recycling or composting, for example), and little to no mention of collective action. This lack of understanding of and engagement in collective action is likely to be linked to the worsening of feelings of eco- and climate anxiety (Pihkala, 2020b). This garden project is an example of collective action. Other examples of collective action in a school setting include a campaign to have a green waste program or the revitalization of a recycling program in a school. These are initiatives that are driven by and accomplished by many people working together toward a common goal. Beyond knowledge of different options for engaging in collective action, however, there is the question of how we can ensure that youth engage in these behaviours. This is where the concept of efficacy comes in. It has previously been determined that knowledge of the impacts of climate change is a weak predictor of action on this issue, and suggested that efficacy is a better predictor (Busch et al., 2019). Here, it becomes important for educators to understand the pedagogical approaches and experiences that will effectively nurture the development of climate and ecological efficacy in students. It has previously been suggested that experiences that involve students in action and in problem-solving practices could promote this intended development in efficacy (Busch et al., 2019). Involving students in problem-solving processes around a problem to which they can personally connect is important in the classroom (Dewey, 1938).

Allowing students to engage with their learning in this way helps them to develop the skills that are necessary for them to eventually participate actively in a democratic society, with an understanding of the important role they have to make decisions and live in a way that supports the greater good and not solely their personal interests. As citizens of a democracy, our students have the right to speak freely about issues that are important to them. It is not expected that they will subscribe to a message that they do not believe in; that is not the meaning of a democracy, and this is not how societies change and evolve. It is in the classroom that our youth have the best chance of learning to respectfully engage in political disagreement and dialogue around the best approach to resolve challenges that affect many. In the context of the climate and ecological crises, this is of the utmost importance. As educators, it is our job to help our students to grow into members of this democracy who understand the importance of making decisions and casting ballots that reflect what they believe is best for the greater good, and not solely for the personal benefit of themselves and those closest to them. One way of doing this is through classroom deliberation, a tool that was employed in my second study, which I will describe below in greater detail. Classroom deliberation (McAvoy and Hess, 2013) involves a classroom discussion around a problem, during which there is a set protocol that provides each participant with an equal opportunity to participate in the discussion without fear of being interrupted or ridiculed. During this exercise, students learn to listen and how to respectfully disagree when their views do not align with those of their peers. They are encouraged to consider the perspectives of others and to be open to changing their perspectives if they feel compelled to do so. The ability to engage in discourse in this way has been demonstrated

to contribute to the development of efficacy (Nabatchi, 2010). This garden project involved a great deal of deliberation and problem solving among participating students. Decisions had to be made around location of the gardens, quantities of lumber, soil and plants to be ordered, as well as the types of plants that would be grown in the garden. Finally, engaging in collective action has been shown to positively affect students' mental health (Vamvalis, 2023).

Some of the students who were interviewed expressed that they were "actually learning things" from this project. This comment is of great interest to me. If you were to ask any classroom educator whether they were actually covering curricular content with their students, their reply would almost certainly be yes. In this circumstance as in others (Budge and Cowlishaw, 2012; Moreono et al., 2018), there can be a gap between students' and educators' perceptions of learning in traditional classroom settings. Here, I use the Oxford Dictionary definition of learn: "to acquire knowledge of (a subject) or skill in (an art, etc.) as a result of study, experience, or teaching". (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023). We know from experiential learning theory that students learn best when they are applying learning in authentic contexts which connect to their personal experiences, and are being provided the opportunity to reflect on these experiences (Breunig, 2016). Based on other answers that students provided, it is clear that this is their understanding of learning as well. Students shared that they felt this project would be "useful for jobs" or for "building things for (their future) children". Here, they were making connections between components of this project and what they have experienced to be useful and needed as they prepare to enter adult society. So to return to my original question for educators regarding if they are covering curricular content, I might rephrase this and ask them to describe the experiences their students were having that relate to the curriculum. I suspect the answer would be much richer and provide greater insight into whether or not their students were being given the opportunity to engage deeply with subject matter and develop the skills that might be valued by both educators and students. I think that another key insight being offered by the students who were interviewed is the importance of the process of learning. Our current education system is fundamentally product driven. The mere fact that educators are required to grade their students and report their achievement on a report card places emphasis on the need for students to produce work to be used as evidence for their level of achievement. This can create a sense of urgency in the classroom, whereby students are expected to meet deadlines on their work and are often penalized for not meeting these. What would it look like to move away from this sense of urgency and to engage fully in the learning process without fear of missing a deadline? I argue that this garden project is an example of what that could look like. Projects of this nature require flexibility and adaptability, just like many different real-world experiences do. For example, one group of students was tasked with making phone calls to local lumber suppliers to inquire about pricing and discounts for building materials. These students had to be flexible and patient while waiting for callbacks or negotiating prices with suppliers.

Conclusion

Although this study focused on the links between a gardening project and students' sense of community at school, there are other possible benefits associated with a project of this nature. For example, in the introduction I refer to previous research that links student participation in vegetable gardening with increased understanding of and appreciation for the nutritional benefits of different types of food. It is possible that gardening, be it vegetable gardening or the design and construction of a garden to support local biodiversity, might empower students as climate activists to further reduce feelings of eco-anxiety, but if our starting point is simply getting them to work together, instilling in them a sense of purpose and agency, I would say we are off to a pretty incredible start.

It is important that post-secondary institutions prepare teacher candidates for the planning and implementation of experiential and authentic learning experiences with their students, and help them understand why this is so important for both their students' well-being and preparedness to enter an uncertain future in light of the global climate crisis. It is also important to consider in what contexts the richest learning occurs, and what our goals for student learning are. As an educator and a researcher, I operate under the assumption that our goals are for our students to learn and for them to use their knowledge to participate in society such that their actions help to benefit the greater good. It is also my intention as an educator to seek to contribute positively to the well-being of my students while they are in my classroom, and so even while we are in dialogue around topics that may be challenging, I have chosen these topics based on my belief that they are in some way important for my students to be aware of, and I am using pedagogical approaches to support my students as they navigate them. Educators must understand the importance of engaging all students as global citizens and provide them the opportunity to engage at a practical level with learning material in a way that feels meaningful to them.

Further Research

Although garden projects such as these are highly engaging for students and understood to be projects that contribute to the well-being of the community, sustained integration of these initiatives into the culture of a school is challenging. Without an adult in the building to champion these projects, they often grow over and are forgotten. Future research should focus on how it is that care for a green space can become part of the culture of a school. Perhaps this involves educating the educators on the value of these kinds of initiatives and helping them to more clearly see the connections they have to their curriculum, or maybe they must become more aware of the urgency of the ecological and climate crises.

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A Keeper of the Winter Trail

By Linda "Lecko" Leckie

"And above all, watch with glittering eyes the whole world around you because the greatest secrets are always hidden in the most unlikely places. Those who don't believe in ***magic*** *will never find it."*
—Roald Dahl, *The Minpins*

My first winter camping adventure was as a student in the University of Calgary's Outdoor Pursuits Program in 1982. Having been a long time summer camper and canoe tripper, with some dabbling in early spring and late fall trips, I was prepared, for this unknown camping season, to be cold, wet, uncomfortable, and for the most part, miserable. Trip planning included finding a partner to build and share a snow cave and, as I didn't know anyone in the class and there was an odd number of students, guess who became the professor's partner.

My professor, a serious climber (Mount Everest serious), and my cave mate for the weekend, turned out to be a great secret that was hidden from this skeptical whippersnapper with experience travelling in only three seasons with their peers. When we arrived at the site where we would carve out our shelter for the night into the side of a mountain, he asked, in a charming South African accent, if I wanted to start to dig first or put the kettle on for a cup of tea. With a shovel in hand, I chose to begin to create our lodgings for the night. My claustrophobic fears were laid well to rest as a three-room snow cave with lots of head room, separate sleeping chambers, a common cooking area, and a large, easily accessed exit was completed in what seemed like no time at all, even after several cups of hot chai tea.

Dinner was delicious, the conversation fascinating, and when I thought that nothing could EVER top this wonderful evening, my travel companion brought out an enormous bag of chocolate chip cookies that his daughter had baked for him—apparently an expedition tradition. I slept warm, dry and very comfortable. I was anything but miserable. The frost spirits had aligned to prove me wrong.

Morning dawned cold and clear, more tea was served, and after a hot breakfast I emerged from the cozy nest feeling rested and ready for a day of travel in the Rocky Mountains. My classmates, on the other hand, appeared slightly less eager and prepared to brave the minus temperature day. Was this beginner's luck or did the magic find me in this unlikely place?

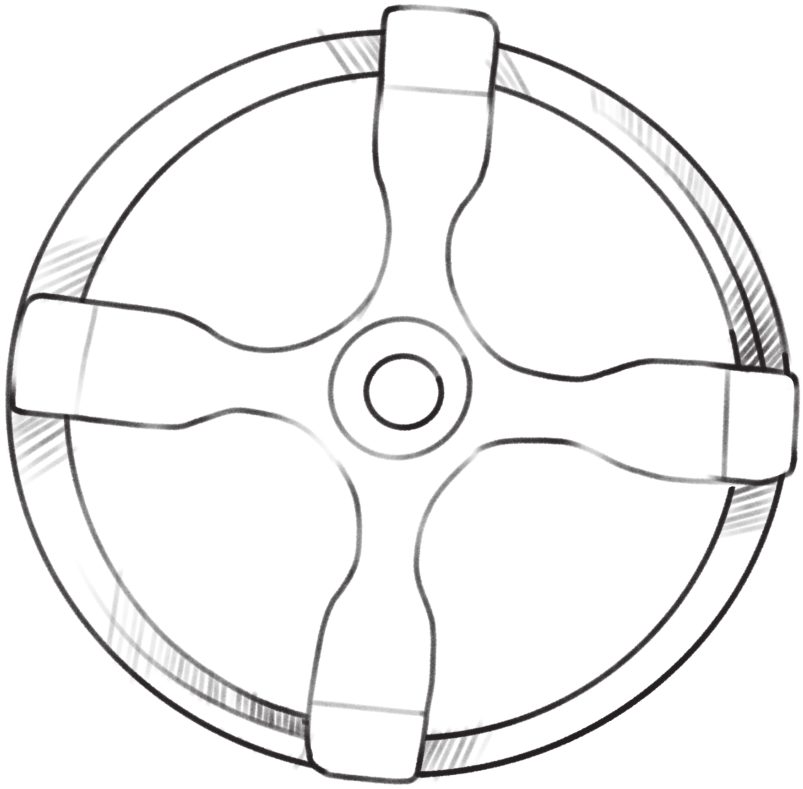
Fast forward nine years and the roles have been reversed, with me as the teacher taking students on a March break dog-sledding adventure north of Thunder Bay with Outward Bound. It was a wonderful time, with sunshine for ten days, temperatures warm enough to ski in our base layer, night-time temperatures dipping to a brisk -40C, a full moon, and a first solo camping endeavour for me and my students. Teacher in name only, I was still very much an apprentice in the art and craft of the winter trail.

The next chapter in my winter travel memoirs finds me, five years later, nestled in a large canvas tent with a balsam floor and a small tin wood stove that turned cold camping into warm winter living. The winter tent, wall tent, prospector tent, hot tent or, as Mike Elrick called it, the "floating classroom" meant no more huddling around the outdoor campfire and heading to separate quinzhees to stay warm. We were now all together in a 13x15 foot shelter that would be our kitchen, living room, dining area, and toasty bedroom. With clotheslines to dry our gear, storytelling by candle light, and breakfast in bed, it would be hard to return to the cold comforts of the snow bank. The "floating classroom" provided the charm and enchantment to cast a spell on even the most zealous disbeliever to see the magic in the winter season.

Over 40 years, I learned everything that I came to know about winter travel from experienced mentors who were my guides along the way. I shared the trail with many of these winter sages on outings with my students and on personal trips. My winter travel education was also enhanced by reading the stories of those who had travelled the winter trail before me. My graduate work in winter travel took me to the Menihek Hills of Labrador for two weeks with Northwoods Ways. This was a meeting of kindred spirits, where theory met practice, where the northern lights dazzled us every night, and we learned the traditional ways of the snow walker.

Like the COEO conference title "Make Peace with Winter" suggests, we are required, as outdoor leaders, to be extra vigilant with respect to participant-centred planning, purposeful preparations and adapting field practices to enjoy the winter environment. Understanding the effects of the winter environment on our students provides for better prevention, identification and management of cold injuries. The winter environment also calls for enhanced group management and situational awareness due to the physical hazards, changing conditions, and student differences in familiarity and comfort with winter conditions.

The Outdoor Council of Canada offers a Winter Field Leader certification course to share the ways of winter travel for educators, who like me all those many years ago, wanted to embrace the wonder of the winter season and be physically active with their students all year long. To me, winter is indeed the magical season and for many years it offered unique opportunities that could not be found in the other three seasons. I continue to welcome and celebrate winter, for as



Florence Page Jacques wrote in her book, *Snowshoe Country*, winter is a "whole quarter of a year gained…. And it is a joy with a different character and power, which awakens new responses."

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The Role of the Morning Meeting on Canoe Trips

By Bob Henderson

The morning meeting: time as a group together before the canoes launch into the day. It is a time for a group to discuss what can be expected in the day ahead or perhaps to intentionally pass on all that in a subtle defiance to celebrate the groupness of unique friendship. Let me explain. First, the meeting is meant to cover the day's expectation, then there is the celebration of the group meeting itself. The former obvious, the latter, nuanced. Either way, the morning meeting is important. Of course, these two themes can be blended.

So, morning chores are done, boats are loaded, folks are keen to get on the water. Now is the time for the guide or whomever (parent, leader of the day, camp counsellor) to bring the group into a circle for a "go over" of the day, which would usually include a map talk, perhaps a quote of the day, a check in on how folks are doing, a yoga sun salutation or paddles stretch, a revisit of a yesterday highlight (perhaps a two stars and a wish activity, which is two highlights of yesterday and a wish for today), putting the forthcoming day into perspective of the whole trip. This, of course, is not a comprehensive list. Sure, the morning meeting seems obvious on paper but in the busyness and enthusiasm of morning departures, it is all too easy to let the morning meeting slide off the shoreline radar. A mistake, I humbly suggest.

I pause to consider a ski tour I was a participant on with no morning meetings. Perhaps only someone who does guide trips would be as annoyed as I was. I never knew the flow of the day, how to pace myself or how others were doing/ feeling. I didn't know the plan, the group vibe or how we collectively were managing the goings on of the group. Something felt missing for the whole trip. The confusing or vacant feelings could have been solved by the morning meeting tradition well played.

However, I suggest there is another kind of morning meeting, more nuanced, more idiosyncratic to the group and more suited to a friendship group. Let's call this the celebration of the group morning meeting. Nuanced is key, because first impressions might be that nothing really happens, yet these circle-up meetings are rarely missed.

With one particular group of canoe trip friends (for over forty years and trip lengths ranging from 5-45 days), it might go something like this:

"I'd like to call this meeting to order."
"Who will accept the minutes from yesterday's meeting?" The minutes are accepted!
"Does anyone have a music trivia question for the day?" For example, name three hit songs by the Zombies. (Dating the group members here!)
"Who would like to do a hummzinger?" Someone hums a song and the group guesses the song title. Hints are welcomed!
And a hockey question! For example, "Who scored the winning Toronto Maple Leaf goal in the 1967 Stanley Cup final game, Pete Stemkoski or Jim Pappin?" Answers are thrown out. Disagreements abound. Some are lost. All, well most, enjoy the banter. Turns out Pappin was

to win the playoff scoring title if he was awarded the goal, but in fact (we think!, Pappin's shot went off Pete Stemkoski in front of the net. "No, it was George Armstrong!" is vehemently suggested, tempers flaring. "He (Armstrong) got an empty net goal at the end of the game!"

The point is: it doesn't really matter and the more irrelevant to the day, the better it seems and somehow, the more friendships flourish and the more tomorrow's morning meeting is hotly anticipated. It all seems like Jerry Seinfeld's, "this is a show about nothing!" But, like the Seinfeld gag, these morning meetings (though not for all) are not about nothing. Against my better judgment (for such things perhaps should not be unpacked and analyzed), what follows is the nuanced benefits of the morning meeting that might never, or hardly, mention the day ahead:

- A celebration of the groupness of the group.
- Drawing out idiosyncratic mastery of knowledge shared among some members and enjoyed by all. There is always more than one topic introduced to bring all into the fray. In a good morning meeting, all are involved.
- Roger's Rules are important. The subtle mocking of formality seems relevant to many, but not to all trails/waterways. Wait, that is Robert's Rules (my friends say this is particularly important when I am running the meeting).
- At times we confer as to the direction of the day. Answer: "Downstream" for river trips!
- A leader can gauge how folks are doing without any fanfare.
- The comfort and confidence in the group togetherness in spirit and leadership as needed is acknowledged daily.
- A club-like tradition is maintained and seems strangely important.

We launch from the shoreline as a group, having adjourned the meeting. It must be added that the standard daily map talk and all that stuff of the day's expectation style of morning meetings is at times on the agenda in some form, perhaps it's downplayed, or perhaps equal timing is provided for both. The defiance is in part an effort to not take ourselves too seriously, BUT be serious when we need to.

On one trip, after a particularly eclectic meeting full of wonderful absurdities with not even a nod to the day ahead, one member new to our long-established friendship group was asked downriver, "Hey what do you make of these morning meetings?" "Well," he responded, "you get a lot more done than many formal meetings I've been involved with!"

Perfect answer, I'd say.

Bob Henderson is a lover of the morning meeting, from Arctic river guiding, to home terrain on the Canadian Shield, to the everyday morning coffee chat.

Education

By Tim Bowling

The geese flying over the yard this morning
sound like the faulty school bell of the middle years
of my life. I don't think I'll go to first block.
My lunch of olive pits and lemon rinds can wait.
Inside me, always, the kid who can't see
the hopscotch squares for his tears.
But outside, too often, the polisher of apples
for power. The dog licks my dangled hand.
I think it's affection – it's probably salt
from the wiping clean of the boards of the world.
With the children gone, the house is a croft
burnt with the invisible fire of my longing
for their childhoods. School bell, church bell,
fire drill of the biological urgencies
that place us in the stony arms of banks.
If I could, I would do the long division
beyond these lengths we're given
but I'm falling behind in every class
except the one in the room that smells
of ripe blackberries and the grass
the grave keeper keeps, hearing the bell
in the bone of the pilots who fly the sky to its darker season.

Cherry Blossoms

By Tim Bowling

They were everywhere when I could be anywhere.
The weather of the world of wonder.
What else can be so beautiful before form?
Heavier than snowflakes, gathering like sleep
in the corners of windowsills, fooling
the sleeping spider in the wind.
The rusted wheelbarrow filled with pirate coin.
The windshield wipers wiping the perfume away all spring.
The barnacles on the black gumboots on the porch
when no one had been near the sea.
On the cashmere shoulders of the first girl I loved,
on her long brown hair, once on her mouth, and
distractedly brushed away, as I blinked
into the slow rain of the man I would become.
The man I am, more and more a memory of self.
The man who would pay to stand and watch
this parade without floats, without sound,
passing by the stillness of the unformed life.

Report Card for Middle Age

By Tim Bowling

Attitude	needs improvement
Hygiene	needs improvement
Working with others	needs improvement
Attendance	intermittent
Penmanship	excellent
Effort	intermittent
Gross Motor Skills	holding
Leadership	non-existent
Canada Fitness Test	incomplete
RSPs	None
Pension/Benefits	None
Working Alone	Exceeds expectationst

Overall

X is likely to progress to old age, but it might prove a challenge to him if he doesn't improve in the areas of attitude, cooperation, hygiene, and personal finance. He spends too much of his time alone and often chooses not to participate in group activities. At times, he doesn't appear to take his studies, or anything else, seriously, though he once produced an excellent flip-comic version of "Bartleby the Scrivener." His penmanship continues to be top of the class, but as it is a skill no longer much in demand, and since X has no RSP savings and no pension or benefits, his later years could be very difficult. I would like to say that it's been a pleasure teaching him this past decade, but it has not been a pleasure at all, his willingness to serve as hall monitor between midnight and dawn notwithstanding. In fact, I fear for X's future. If he does not begin to apply himself, if his attitude does not improve, it is almost certain that he will wind up dead.

Found Poem of Strait of Georgia Insults

By Tim Bowling

You're a Dull Oregon grape you black-bellied plover of a long-billed dowitcher. You lugworm you screwshell. What a walleye pollock of a Kelp-encrusting Bryozoan. Yeah, you heard me, you Suborbicular kellyclam. Twelve-tentacled parasitic anemone. Your scaup's always been Lesser you three-spine stickleback Spring-headed sea squirt. That's right, you Hairy chiton, I said it. Don't give me any of your Green falsejingle, you Fat gaper. Who do you think you are, the Lord dwarf-venus himself? You're nothing but a Flap-tip piddock with an Aggregated nipple sponge. Come on, you Pile worm you Dubious dorid you squat lobster. You want a piece of me? Agh, you're all Hollow green nori you yellowleg pandalid. I wouldn't waste my time on a solitary tunicate like you. Yeah, so's your mother you Oblique yoldia. Goddamned mud shrimp. Surf scoter. Sea-clown triopha. Gribble. Sea noodle. Dunce cap limpet. Bladderclam. Whelk.

Tim Bowling is the author of 24 works of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. He is the recipient of numerous honours, including two Edmonton Artists' Trust Fund Awards, five Alberta Book Awards, a Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal, two Writers' Trust of Canada nominations, two Governor General's Award nominations and a Guggenheim Fellowship in recognition of his entire body of work. Tim has shared the preceding poems from his latest collection, In the Capital City of Autumn.


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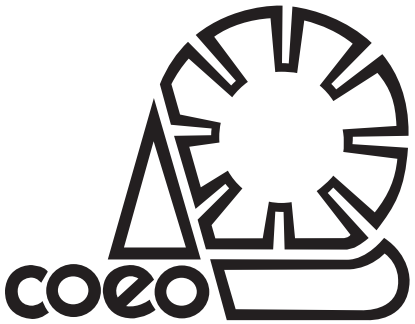

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