Pathways

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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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Features

Columns

Editors' Log

Pathways: The Ontario Journal of Outdoor Education has engaged with Wild Pedagogies' (Jickling et al., 2018) ideas and practices since the first special issue in the summer of 2016. Here, *Pathways* reported on the Yukon River 2014 Wild Pedagogies Floating Colloquium. This travelling conference was in many ways an international gathering, serving as an official launch of Wild Pedagogies. From the beginning, and now more than ever, Wild Pedagogies remains a label to rally support for a gathering of ideas and practices to encourage rethinking, reimagining, and renegotiating education with a lofty purpose attentive to our changing cultural landscape. In short, education must change to meet planetary and cultural pressures that demand a more ecologically minded future, one that supports the flourishing of all life. Outdoor education has a major role to play in this regard. Lofty aspirations, certainly!

Close to ten years later, there has been a special issue in the spring of 2020, and now, this one that follows the Wild Pedagogies: Nature as Co-Teacher Conference that took place in Enaforsholm, Sweden, August 2023. These special issues are in addition to many single articles over the years. For example, there was Chris Peter's *Gone Fishin': Newfoundland Wild Pedagogies Inspired Lessons* (winter 2023), Sean Blenkinsop and Greg Scutt's *The Voice of Trees and Changing the Culture of Education* (spring 2023), and Devin Mutic's *Plight and Possibility: In Dialogue with Change* (fall 2023). Of course, there have been many more loosely associated with Wild Pedagogies themes — many!

Over time, there has been the publication of a textbook so to speak (see Wild Pedagogies: Touchstones for Re-negotiating Education and the Environment in the Anthropocene by Jickling et al., 2018), many theme issues in scholarly journals, (see The Canadian Journal of Environmental Education, and the Australian Journal of Environmental Education) a few doctoral dissertations that we are aware of, and many sessions at international conferences. Of course, most importantly, there have been inspired teachers across the world, at all levels, bringing Wild Pedagogies into their practice. Many educators are increasingly being drawn to demands for educational change that is positive, doable, and celebratory, instead of being driven by doom, gloom and sacrifice. The six Wild Pedagogies touchstones set up educators for challenges and success towards cultivating the advance of an ecological consciousness, and how to do education differently. It may be a challenge of working against a status quo, against the grain, but timing is postponed for attention to change like never before.

We are delighted to share that interest in this Wild Pedagogies special issue of *Pathways* resulted in enough content to produce two issues. The articles for both issues have been organized by similarity of the ideas, topics, approaches, and themes discussed. The present issue is the first of the two, with the second being fall 2024 37(1). We hope these articles are sources of inspiration for educational change.

Bob Henderson & Megan Tucker
Editors

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.

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President's View

I hope each of you are enjoying a restful and soul-filling summer break! Where are you currently connecting the most with, and having your cup-filled by, Mother Nature this season? Is it a specific fruiting tree or garden in your backyard, yielding delicious berries or daily greens to fill your salad bowl? Is it a rushing river carrying your boat downstream, gracing you with catching exhilarating eddies and a peaceful orchestra to lull you and your paddling pals to sleep? Or perhaps it's the calm of a new or nearby hiking trail, covered by oxygen, shade giving forests? Wherever it may be, I am so glad you are soaking in this beautiful season and well-deserved rest. Your students and staff teams will no doubt be inspired to hear of your summer adventures and connections with the natural world.

The upcoming 52nd COEO Annual Fall Conference at RKY Camp promises to be an inspiring event and we hope to see you and your colleagues there! This year's conference theme, "Speak Out: The Power of Words in Outdoor Education/Exprimez-Vous : Le Pouvoir des Mots dans L'Éducation en Plein Air" is a means by which to organize our learning around the interactions between language and outdoor education. There will be opportunities to share current best practices in outdoor learning, expand our dialogue to accommodate for bilingual (English/French) options, as well as honour the huge importance of the resurgence of Indigenous languages and the role we can play in true reconciliation. If you appreciate the conference committee just as much as I do, perhaps you want to think about joining an upcoming conference committee yourself (learn more at the fall conference about how you can get involved!). These professional development events would not come together as beautifully as they do without the support and collaboration of many amazing COEO members!

This summer, as we watch so much of our country struggle with increasing heat domes and uncontrollable wildfires, I'm sure many are sharing in my climate anxiety and are itching to take more tangible action. The heat pump and electric vehicle my family invested in this year, albeit a start, don't bring me nearly enough credence, and I'm continually left looking to our government and corporate bodies for stronger and more effective environmental leadership to trickle down to the masses. Obviously now more than ever we need our representatives making sound decisions to positively affect generations ahead of humans, biodiversity and healthy ecosystems. We know our current students will eventually be in these decision-making roles, and as such, we can rest assured that spending our days connecting youth with our fragile environment is a best practice for protecting our precious Mother Earth. Which leads me to this next point…

This spring, the Ontario Ministry of Education released its 2024/25 operating funding for school boards with a "back to basics" focus, introducing "Core Ed" funding, a restructured version of the former Grants and Student Needs (GSN). Core Ed is comprised of the former 18 grants and 77 allocations re-organized into six funding pillars and 28 allocations to streamline the funding formula, intended to "make it easier to understand and improve school board accountability". Unfortunately, this move has us concerned for outdoor education funding, as the Ministry of Education is no longer providing an allocated, separate envelope for OE programs for each school board. Now it is up to each school board to decide individually how to allocate their funding between many, many programs. I am pleased to share that several active COEO members are hard at work advocating for the continuation of funding for outdoor education programs through Ontario. We are taking a two-pronged approach: advocating to both individual school boards and the ministry about the importance and benefits of OE to ensure the sustainability of allocation of OE funds. If you are interested in contributing to this effort, please email hilcoburn@gmail.com.

I look forward to seeing you all at RKY Camp for what promises to be an impactful fall 2024 conference!

Hilary Coburn
President

Assessment and Evaluation Gone Wild: In Search of Options

By Sean Blenkinsop

For the last fifteen years, my research team and I have been working with schools that are interested in "doing" education differently. These are public elementary schools who recognize that the status quo is just not cutting it in terms of questions of social and ecological justice, nor in terms of preparing students for either the world that is or the quite uncertain one that is to come. That being said, it has been our contention since the beginning of this work that the problems of injustice are not simply issues of individual behaviour and a lack of proper instruction and educational content, but a deeper, very complex set of cultural problems baked into Canadian public education and mainstream Canadian culture for that matter. To change behaviour, one individual at a time, one outdoor education program at a time, is to just set students up with the frustration of having to negotiate a Western world that has little time for these ecological ideas or more socially oriented ways of being and the pain of having to keep on witnessing injustice and the destruction of the natural world they love; a natural world that is inaccessible from the get-go, both economically and culturally, by so many already.

So, our work became about cultural change and we established a couple of working premises. First, that whole schools were potentially cultural units. Second, that we needed to be willing to re-think education all the way down. Now that does not mean jettisoning everything so much as being willing to question, re-think, and re-create everything if necessary, multiple times if need be, in order to respond to these cultural assumptions that are socially and ecologically unjust. And third, that education is necessarily at the heart of any substantive cultural change. It is also at the heart of maintaining the same-sameness of the culture and it is in that "help or hinder" the work of change that we find the rub.

So, what does this wee frame have to do with Wild Pedagogies and assessment? Good question. As we began to do this work of ecologizing schools in a serious way, it was assessment that kept tripping us up. We were able, fairly easily, to spend way more of the school day outside and that helped us to change pedagogically, partially in response to where we were and partially because we were wanting to change. For us, teaching practices became more "spontaneous" (Jickling et al., 2018) both because we wanted them to be so in an effort to honour the presence, agency, and rights of the natural world, but also because it is hard to ignore a dead shrew, a thicket of ripe salmon berries, or a river full of salmon for that matter. This process was aided by an ongoing questioning and critiquing of our own practices and assumptions in relation to education and at the epistemological and ontological level. Here, we began to turn towards "nature as a co-teacher" while challenging ourselves to release control and "expand our imaginations", not only with regard to human-teacher-centric assumptions, but also of closely directed and then tightly tested outcomes (Jickling et al., 2018). In turn, this opened space to invert the curriculum (allowing experiences/encounters to drive the learning rather than pre-ordained outcomes) and for the natural world to engage with learners while those human learners had more room to dive into their own interests and questions. As the wrestling continued we found that often the work we were doing was being tripped up by our own culturally reinforced imaginative limits with regard to assessment.

Here we were, working on relationships to each other, to community, and to the natural world around us. "Building human alliances" and "locating the wild" (Jickling et al., 2018) in the language of Wild Pedagogies, while focusing on cooperation, mutual flourishing for all, creating a sense of belonging and trying to undo assumptions of human elitism, anthropocentrism, and utilitarian orientations to the natural world (e.g. as resource, as

playground, as backdrop, as "affordances"), and yet assessment was pushing us back into these deeply troublesome individualistic, hierarchical, teacher-controlled, knowledge extractive, and competitive tropes that we were seeking to overcome and were having some successes in so doing, only to have troubling forms of evaluation undercut that work.

Our first move was to try and offer ways that parents/caregivers might witness, be part of, and understand the diversity and depth of the learning that was occurring. To that end, these schools were opened to include the larger community in more substantive ways. One school even formalized the process by developing programs that would feature students sharing their learnings. For the K-2s, this became semesterly "wonder walks" where parents/caregivers would accompany their child to various important outdoor learning locations. There, the students were encouraged to share, for example, their learnings about tree species, their bark rubbing art, or their understanding of species interconnections. Often the human teachers would have placed prompts at each location to support the children in remembering things salient to the location. Intriguingly, not only did these wonder walks show how much the students had learned but it helped the adults to better understand the richness of the learning that was happening. For the older students (grades three to seven), the event was known as a "community forum"; here, parents and caregivers along with invited guests and important community members (remember that there is a lot of outreach at these schools, it is amazing what incredible knowledge and resources there are around us if we just ask and invite) were treated to an afternoon of activities, presentations, and shared portfolios, which showed not only the diversity of learnings happening for the individuals in the class but also that which was happening at the communal level. But that was not enough: at another school, human teachers began to focus on "learning stories," often narrated stories accompanied by photographic images that were uploaded weekly and allowed parents/caregivers to join their learners on their journey. In fact, in a move to really take education beyond the school walls, parents/caregivers were encouraged to add the learning stories they were witnessing at home or on the weekends, and to upload these rich events that were occurring outside of school, bringing parents/caregivers, teachers, and the community (nature included) closer together in the project of educating young humans for the future. And yet, we are still not satisfied…How does one include mutual flourishing in the world of evaluation? What does co-assessment with nature mean and look like? How might we further "wild" these concepts and practices of assessment and evaluation? And ultimately, to what end are we assessing and does the form chosen align with those aims?

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Sean Blenkinsop is a professor in the faculty of education at Simon Fraser University. Current research explores teacher education and imagination, school and cultural change, nature as co-teacher, and eco-social justice. Most recent books are: Education as Practice of Eco-Social-Cultural Change *(2023) and* Ecologizing Education: Nature-Centred Teaching for Cultural Change *(2024).*

Wild Pedagogies: 10 Years and Two Touchstones Later

By Bob Jickling[1]

It has been exciting to see Wild Pedagogies expanding—in interest, participation, and thinking. This is as it should be given that Wild Pedagogies was never designed to be a fixed set of ideas, but rather an agent for discovery and exploration. Indeed, we have always encouraged practitioners to experiment, especially with the touchstones. As we live in extraordinary times of war, pandemic, protest, polarization, and during pending environmental catastrophes, we know that humans cannot continue along the current educational path and expect to disrupt this trajectory. Yet it isn't exactly clear how we should proceed. We are in a period that will require considerable exploration.

In this spirit, Sean Blenkinsop and I responded to a call from the *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education* (CJEE) for a special issue on teacher education. We wanted to reflect on the preceding years and look for gaps and omissions, and experiment especially within the educator-oriented touchstones. We came up with two ideas that seemed to be underrepresented and two new touchstones (seven and eight) to add to the original six.

These were developed and presented in the CJEE special issue and have been modified and edited in a steadily evolving manuscript summarizing Wild Pedagogies (Jickling et al., 2024). In the balance of this essay, we present summaries of these two new touchstones. As always, you are invited to adapt, or even re-write, these touchstones to work better within your own experiments.

Touchstone #7: Learning That Is Loving, Caring and Compassionate

We believe that humans can develop rich relationships with the more-than-human world, and that relationships of reciprocal care contribute to overcoming the alienation between many humans and the natural world (Jickling & Blenkinsop, 2020, p. 126).

David Orr (2017) calls for educational change, because "without exaggeration it will come down to whether students come through their formal schooling as more clever vandals of the Earth and of each other" on one hand, "or as loving, caring, compassionate, and competent healers, restorers, builders, and midwives to a decent, durable, and beautiful future" (pp. ix–x) on the other. What will it take to nurture caring, compassionate, and competent restorers of the earth?

There is no simple answer to this question, but caring and compassionate learning must include relationships with more-than-human others. Such a perspective places one in the world in a particular way—not so much as an individual; rather, as a member of a broader interconnected community. Norwegian eco-philosopher Arne Næss (1988) advocates such an inclusive ecological approach to being-in-the-world. For him, this approach is rooted in deeply intimate relationships that shift one's understanding of self from an egotistical "self" to the more expansive "Self" as an expression of identification, interrelationship, and compassion in a more-than-human world. Critically, Næss was inspired by experiences with another that evoked empathy. He often returns to his experience of watching a writhing flea die in a bath of acidic chemicals. In recognizing empathy for the suffering of the flea, he began to see, encounter, and be in the world differently.
This was not a happy experience; it is profound but not pretty; it is transformative for Næss, and decidedly not abstract. Key

learning elements can be characterized as primarily held, felt, and disruptive (Jickling, 2017).

This raises intriguing possibilities. If Næss is correct, then it is important to provide opportunities for rich, lived experiences. Such opportunities can encourage relational positioning and affective identification in the world—evoking respect, wonder, care, and even awe and fear. Such understandings, located beyond an individual human world, can, it seems, inspire learning that is loving, caring, and compassionate. What does teaching practice begin to look like if we take these insights seriously?

With this discussion as background, educators might want to consider questions such as:

- What did I do today that required learners to be sensually present in their learning? To encounter the other, to feel, care, respect, and to notice the more-than-human world?
- Evaluation of some important learning can be elusive. How can I create a positive space to honour its existence?
- Have I considered how to hold space for learners as they encounter the range of emotions that appear in response to burgeoning care?

Touchstone #8: Expanding the Imagination

We believe that future teachers can no longer be trained for a system that leaves students ill prepared to respond to current crises and imaginatively unable to create new responses. (Jickling & Blenkinsop, 2020; Blenkinsop et al., 2018).

Current ecological precarity requires us to think differently, be differently, and imagine differently. This requires ecological forms of imagination that reach beyond our own skulls to engage external materials, processes, entities, and places (Morse, 2022). We must be aware that the imagination is not as broad and flexible as generally assumed. As educators, this requires us to recognize our culturally limited imaginations. And part of our pedagogical work will be to expand options available to teachers and learners. The languages we speak and the foundational stories we are told shape who we are in the world. And they limit what we can think and imagine.

While imaginative capacity will always be limited, we can expand our reach. This requires: open and generous orientation; willingness to change; active gathering of ideas about how to be-in-the-world, both within one's cultural reality and beyond; expansion of available tools; careful consideration of the stories, metaphors, and languages used; and thoughtful engagement in an ever-widening range of experiences. The last consideration recognizes that imagination relies on the "stuff" of living to work with. It is the ideas, concepts, experiences, encounters, that build the imagination generated. It is then up to educators to offer students wilder possibilities for expanding their imaginative potential.

The challenge of expanding imagination is difficult, however there are some things to consider. We can name this limitation for educators. This might in turn act to de-centre the teacher as an expert and open the space for risk-taking and pedagogical exploration. If we are imaginatively limited by our histories and cultures, then none of us has the whole answer. This naming might leave space for the wild and the spontaneous to nourish possibilities. It might also challenge the sometimes defensive "it just won't work" kind of thinking that can hold us back. Our sense is that the challenge to expand imagination might be essential for responding to this changing world.

- With this discussion as background, educators might want to consider questions such as:
  What did I do with my practice today that pushed outside the students' previous experiences and my own imagination?

- What new "stuff," experiences and stories, did I add to the mix? Did I make a considered attempt to provide space for the unusual to happen?
- What cognitive, physical, cultural, and natural tools am I working with right now? And what new ones might I try introducing? Where might I look to find additional ideas?

Going Forward

By reflecting on our own underpinning ideas of Wild Pedagogies and situating them within the dynamic process encouraged within the touchstones, we hope to have added a little more to the body of Wild Pedagogies thinking. But just as importantly, we hope to have encouraged you to, similarly, explore and experiment with wild ways forward, and to become ever more imaginative and rebellious educators.

Notes

[1] It is perhaps more accurate to say that Bob Jickling has curated this paper drawing heavily on Jickling and Blenkinsop (2020) and Jickling et al. (2024). Though, any fault found with the brief introduction and concluding thoughts, and the editing of these new touchstones, are mine alone.

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Bob Jickling, Professor Emeritus at Lakehead University, has interests in environmental education and philosophy and his current research attempts to find openings for radical re-visioning of education. His most recent books include Wild Pedagogies: Touchstones for Re-Negotiating Education and the Environment in the Anthropocene *and* Environmental Ethics: A Sourcebook for Educators*. As a long-time wilderness traveller, much of his inspiration is derived from the landscape of his home in Canada's Yukon.*

Risk Reckoned Wrongly

By Chris Beeman

This paper is designed for an audience that is involved in educational practice, especially nature based and outdoor education, and especially in the public education system. It is a shorter attempt, with some new ideas, to address an idea I wrote about a few years ago, published in the journal *Policy Futures in Education*, with the title "Wilding Liability in Education: Introducing the Concept of Wide Risk as Counterpoint to Narrow-Risk-Driven Educative Practice" (Beeman, 2021). I hope that this less formal and less detailed paper will be useful. I was invited to submit it here because the other version is very long. This paper, being so short, is really reduced to the noting of a few key ideas, rather than an argument. Besides its brevity, it has a few new and some clarified ideas. But perhaps it is not beautiful. If you like this stripped-down version, please read the earlier and more detailed paper: it gives a greater grounding to the argument made here. And, because I wrote the jokes, it is very, very funny.

This paper is about risk in educational practice, particularly in outdoor and nature-based learning, and the examples I give here are appropriate to the context. The educational practices I know best are Canadian. The particular nature-based practices I am considering revolve around learning outside (i.e., away from schools and in less human-controlled places) precisely because in this learning, the difference between wide and narrow risk-taking is most evident. While some of the arguments here relate to simple physical activity, in the longer paper, I make the case that physical, intellectual, spiritual and emotional well-being may be enhanced through learning in wilder settings. And because of this, *not* engaging in education in these ways carries its own risk. Being part of and understanding oneself to be part of an ecosystem through which one's position, identity, role, and contribution *within that ecosystem* can be consistently re-enacted and reaffirmed are, in my view, major aspects of what health actually is. The lack of experiencing that position and role is perhaps the greatest and most damaging risk I will allude to in this paper.

With this in mind, the theoretical idea I wish to raise here is that we see risk in far too limited terms. The way we (in Canada and in many other developed countries) have tended to view risk in outdoor education is distorted and this way of regarding risk is contributing to the significant injury we are causing children in public education. The distortion I refer to is the tendency to see the only risk worthy of our concern as what I am calling *narrow risk*, i.e. risk of usually very limited timeframe causing particular, discernible injury. When it comes to considering risk, we are normally used to seeing clear cause-and-effect relationships in *narrow* ways*:* "This child fell here on the school grounds and bumped their head" is the way we think of risk. "Therefore, the play structure needs to be removed from school property" is how we address risk–at least, it has been until now.

It is more than coincidence that this is exactly the kind of risk that is best suited (or more vulnerable) to current litigation practices. It used to be the case that the United States of America was viewed as a litigious society. Since the adoption of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982), Canada has moved in a somewhat similar, though not as extreme, direction. As soon as rights are named, then a failure to protect these rights provides a direct route to litigation. The Charter may have benefits, but this one aspect can be catastrophic when it comes to ensuring the overall well-being of students. In Canada, school boards are fearful of being sued and, in response, design educative practices to in part avoid being sued. Perhaps, in *large* part.

Yet, I would like to raise the possibility that far greater risks and great damage are being visited on children in schools which, until the paper I wrote a few years ago,

many administrators and teachers could claim to be unaware of. I delight in the fact that papers like this one may mean that administrators can no longer use the argument of ignorance.

I have to apologize to my latest victims, but as you are reading this sentence, you can no longer claim to be unaware of this issue. *Lo siento, chicas y chicos!* When a high level of potential long-term ill health (and thus a very serious and broad kind of injury) occurs under the conditions of a duty of care for children who are obliged by law to be in schools, this is no small matter. I call these kinds of risks that have hitherto mostly flown beneath the radar "wide risks". These risks and injuries are, in part:

- The physical health risks associated with stasis, which is the lack of cardiovascular fitness, flexibility, balance and physical strength through the systematic stupefaction of physical bodies that are designed to move and to learn through movement;

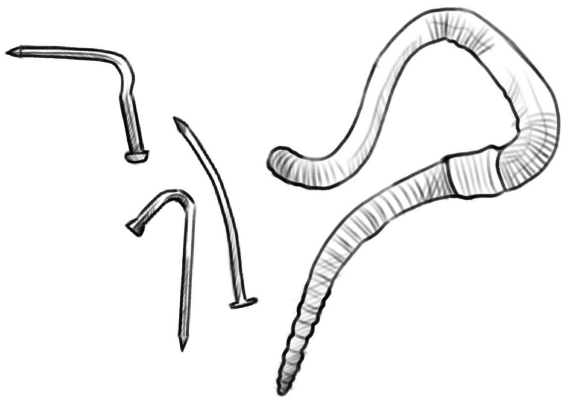
- The intellectual and emotional health risks and injuries connected with too much screen time, social media and addiction to programs and devices;

- The political risks to a citizenry of its being allied with and addicted to, through an electronic device, brands and thus to feel the need to *brand* one's self as loyal to corporations (normally transnational), over allegiance to other people, places, nation states, or citizens;

- And perhaps most calamitous, the loss of a broader ecosystem identity that can only occur through being rooted in and with a place whose context is defined in terms that exceed the simply human (Kimmerer, 2013; Naess, 2008).

All of these risks pose threats to health not merely during students' time in schools, but for their (possibly-rather-shorter-and-less-healthy-than-their-parents') lifetimes. Because cultural practices are often handed down intergenerationally, they may also have effects on the children of those thus affected. These risks are not yet really feared because how they cause harm (and thus, who bears responsibility, and with it, liability) is less easily discerned. To the unending shame of school administrators, the wider risks I note are of less concern to school administrators than narrow risks, because (currently) schools are not held responsible for them. Because they are held less responsible, administrators can afford to understand them less.

I call them wide risks because "wide" carries with it the connotation of being broader and less defined, but also bigger. We are unable to fully know these risks, in part because the injuries resulting from them might not appear for years or decades, although I would argue that we are also just not looking clearly enough and in the right places for the damage that is happening now. Many of these wider risks may be alleviated by turning off electronic devices and learning outside and in less human-controlled spaces and in less outcome-oriented ways.



And here is the point: there is no way to avert the broader risks I note a couple of paragraphs back, which are only just beginning to be realized and taken seriously now (e.g. the government of Ontario banning cell phone use in schools as of last week courtesy of CBC [2024]), except by recognizing that children actually *need to be taking other kinds of risks* in order to be healthy, overall. Perhaps these kinds of risks, which frequently happen in the absence of devices and

through movement outdoors, can be considered healthy risks. And these are precisely the narrow risks that, until now, young students have been actively prevented from taking; precisely the kinds of risks to which school boards have been so allergic. To restate the obvious in terms that may make things much more obscure, the wide risks to overall health I note above may be averted when students both learn how to take narrow risks and take them.

To recapitulate:

- In public schooling, there are narrow and wide risks (I have taken the liberty of making this conceptual distinction). Narrow risks have to do with mostly physical injury from discernible events. Wide risks are longer lasting and broader. They may harm students in much more complex and less easily discernible ways over longer periods of time.

- Narrow risks are the kind we have hitherto understood: short-term events where responsibility can easily be attributed, liability established, and failure to prevent can be punished. These include things like breaking an arm or leg or getting cut. Although there are many other riskier condoned activities such as contact sports, narrow risks of physical injury may have a slightly higher likelihood of occurring in nature-based or outdoor learning. So, school administrators have an incentive to avoid these. Wide risks, on the other hand, are less easy to prove causation and responsibility for, yet often carry longer-term effects.

- Administrators have mainly been concerned with narrow risks because, until now, these have been the kind over which they have been most likely to be held responsible. Yet, overwhelming research is showing the less obvious costs of not, for example, risking movement in wilder places, which has some narrow risk, but which may greatly contribute to overall health for students. In short, learning outdoors has been limited because school administrators see the (sometimes) slightly increased risk of physical injury (the narrow risk associated with any movement in less-human-controlled spaces) and fail to see the wider risk of what happens *when this does not occur.*

Again, for more detailed theorizing and research on this issue, please see the earlier paper.

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Let Go: Turning Outdoor Obstacles Into Opportunities

By Lee Beavington

The benefits of outdoor place-based education are numerous and well documented. Increased learner agency, heightened focus and self-esteem, boosting social-emotional skills and academic achievement, fostering community connections, and enhancing spiritual, physical, emotional and psychological health and well-being. So why don't more teachers, and other facilitators, take their learning outdoors? Doing so requires letting go of some control in terms of content, convention, and environment. What if we flipped some of these obstacles so that they became opportunities? This article explores barriers to Wild Pedagogies and the potential for emergent learning by embracing a more fluid teaching approach.

"There is too much content to cover."

Teachers of content-heavy courses or curricula may worry about lost class time. Going outdoors requires coordination and transition, and there is no place for a PowerPoint. Yet this could be an opportunity for Learning in Depth or inquiry-based learning. Instead of covering many topics briefly, learners can focus on a specific topic or question (chosen by them and connected to place). Less definitions and worksheets and more engagement that is experiential and ecologically relevant.

"But I can't lecture outdoors."

Then don't. Storytelling, mindfulness, and active learning are more suited to the outdoor environment. If you need some direct instruction, do this beforehand or limit how much directed instruction you do outside. Discourse that occurs outdoors is more open and authentic, since the teacher/student, expert/novice, authority/follower dichotomies are unsettled. As Mark Fettes and Sean Blenkinsop (2023) argue in their book, *Education as the Practice of Eco-Social-Cultural Change*, become a "time rebel." Release the expectation of content quantity and instead tune into relationships and moments of wonder, "fiercely resisting the colonizing pressures and practices of scarcity driven education" (Fettes & Blenkinsop, 2023, p. 35).

"The outdoors is not accessible to everyone."

This is an important consideration. There are mobility, financial, and other potential barriers to learning outdoors. How might we move beyond traditional barriers and learn in alternate settings? Part of the answer is awareness, and knowing the abilities and anxieties of our learners. Part of this is ensuring learners are aware of the terrain, literally: paths, roads, washroom proximity, weather forecast, distance to travel. If we flip the idea of the outdoors being less accessible, we might ponder on those students who feel anxious sitting at a desk all day. Many learners may prefer and benefit from going outside, as it can afford more autonomy, movement, self-regulation, and a sense of adventure.

"There is too much uncertainty."

When in the forest, following a stream, or even on the school or university grounds, there is always the possibility of the unexpected. Entering this with a flexible mindset can turn these presumed distractions (e.g., birds or other wildlife, community members, a flooded trail, another set of students) into a poignant encounter. Western and colonial thinking fixate on knowability and clear structure. As Fettes and Blenkinsop (2023) elaborate, "What teacher, for example, is not familiar with the experience of trying to cram ever increasing amounts of curricular 'stuff' into an ever-shrinking amount of classroom time, while at the same time having to turn away from rich learning moments or stop free exploration before it commences?" (p. 34). Dropping expectations for covering specific content opens opportunities for emergent learning that fosters collaboration, team building, and/or connection with the natural world.

"We don't have nature at our school."

This depends on how we define "nature" or "wild". Most schools lack access to vast tracts of wilderness or something akin to old growth. However, most will have access to a grassy field or a local park. Tiny but thriving ecosystems of life exist in grass and the soils underneath. The moss in the cracks between sidewalks, the birds that forage or nest at/near school, or a single tree can all be a source of many stories, projects, or exercises in attunement. Planning less frequent but longer excursions can take learners to wilder places, where they can witness more-than-human life flourishing on its own terms.

"This is only relevant for learning about nature."

While the outdoors is a fitting place to learn biology or geography, a case can be made that any discipline can be taught effectively on the land. This requires a shift from viewing the natural world as a collection of objects about which we want to understand, to an ecosystem of human and other-than-human beings and landscapes that inform and inspire everything from creativity and language to sustainability and (insert your discipline here). Rather than a backdrop, the natural world becomes a co-teacher with countless threads of curricular and—more importantly—relational connection.

"I don't know enough natural history to teach outdoors."

Good point. But only relevant if you teach botany or geology or a topic that necessitates identifying plants, animals, landforms and the dynamics that spiral them all together.
Let go of being and embrace a more learner-centered approach by asking powerful questions, letting students follow their own inquiries, and giving space for the natural world to speak on its own terms. This is a chance for you to learn alongside your students, and compost the idea of "learning outcomes", as Fettes and Blenkinsop (2023) articulate, "to be radically rethought—for what if one valued learning outcome is to recognize one's profound ignorance, or the inappropriateness of seeking further knowledge in the absence of a fundamental shift in relationship?" (p. 40).

"My administration or colleagues are not supportive of taking learning outdoors."

This is a real barrier. How to chip away at this? You can gather evidence for the impact of ecological place-based education, offer workshops to colleagues where they can practice outdoor facilitation in a supportive environment, or invite a speaker/facilitator to help with this work. Creating a new culture for education takes time. Host a book club with Robin Wall Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass,* which can act as a bridge from colonial/rigid/prescriptive learning to land-based/reciprocal/holistic education.

"How do I assess outdoor learning?"

Experiential, nature-based learning that is open to emergent possibilities can be difficult to assess. Some authentic learning options include reflection, discussion, and portfolios. However, compared to quizzes or essays, these can be challenging to measure. Perhaps we need to address the larger pedagogical question: Is it more important to have authentic learning connected to land, place, identity, and community? Or to be able to measure these through a number, grade or other rubric? Some student experiences cannot be measured, yet they may be our learners' most poignant—and cherished—educational memories. Can we not see this as a loss in the lesson plan, but rather a gift of connection and taking learning and personal connection deeper?

"I haven't been trained to teach outdoors."

This should give you pause. By default we usually teach who we are and how we were taught. Reading about nature- or place-based teaching, or delving into the theory, might help inform your practice and justify this work to reluctant believers. But as educators, we need to see and

experience effective and intentional outdoor facilitation. This is best done by having someone model this. Join a teacher that regularly takes their class outdoors. Attend an experiential conference where hands-on workshops have participants engage in ecological place-based activities. Notice the possibilities that emerge and adapt them to your teaching practice.

"We lose so much time getting outside."

Learning outdoors requires preparation and transition. When walking to a location, instead of considering this "time lost", another option is to incorporate the Walking Curriculum. In this way, learners engage through movement and active participation. A walk is a great time to connect (learners tend to open up in this less formal setting), to reflect on learning, well-being, and our roles (there is lots of research on how walking can explore anti-racist and anti-colonial ways of being, such as the WalkingLab), and to tune in to the natural world (try incorporating a soundwalk or other sensory focus).

"There is too much risk going outdoors."

Children are much more likely to die from being driven to school than from climbing a tree. A palpable fear around tree climbing is not supported by the evidence: the number of kids that die from climbing trees is infinitesimally small; 0.00000156% according to one study (Tulley, 2010). Playing in natural environments helps students navigate physical risk. This is not to say that risks do not exist, such as allergies, tripping hazards, and changing weather. Yet outdoor learning is a fitting place to stretch comfort zones and explore unique risk tolerance on a physical, interpersonal, and emotional level. In reality, there is risk in any learning environment. The natural world can be a source of fears, but also a place to overcome them. Many potential risks can be mitigated by a sound safety plan, identifying hazards, setting boundaries, and a confident teacher. Taking learning outdoors can ultimately cultivate students better able to manage the risks we are afraid of.

Final Thoughts

Letting go of conventional teaching is not a passive process. Active effort is required to challenge the status quo and be willing to teach differently. We must also acknowledge that a series of "tips and tricks" is unlikely to lead to transformational change. If we want to shift from conformity and efficiency and follow Fettes and Blenkinsop's (2023) advice "to stretch individual and collective thinking into wilder, less linear, more systemic, creative possibilities" (p. 40) then some guiding questions may help. Therefore, the suggestions previously presented might be framed by questions such as:

1. How am I repeating settler-colonial narratives and practices in my teaching?
2. How can I shift from seeing the natural world as a backdrop, to the natural world being an active participant?
3. In what ways can I co-create learning with my students?
4. Is strict adherence to learning outcomes getting in the way of meaningful educational experiences?
5. What powerful questions can I ask learners that leaves space for mystery and unknowability?
6. How can the more-than-human members of our community become part of my teaching (or other) practice?

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Learning to Love a Tree: Imaginative Role Play as a Wilding Approach

By Lee McArthur

Introduction

This article begins with "autobiographical" stories of two trees: Old Scots Pine, a tree in Sweden on the top of a hill overlooking Stornasen Mountain, and Scots Otonabee, a tree in North America on the shores of the Otonabee River at the Trent Campus in Peterborough, Ontario. These stories were told through the pedagogical process of role play. Meet the trees and learn about the pedagogical approaches that guide towards this tree storying.

Greetings, I Am Old Scots Pine of Sweden

Hello. Let me introduce myself. I'll begin with some names I hold. I am Old One of the Hill. I am Wind Breather, Scurvy Cure, Carbon Eater and Epiphytic Lichen Partner. I am Tall One and Mountain Watcher. And I am Son, Great Grandfather, Grandfather and Father. I hold these names and many others. One of your names for me is Pinus sylvestris, another is Scotch or Scots pine. You have also called me pine tree or coniferous, referring to my cones. I am also Scaley Bark Tree and Firey Trunk Tree; as my trunk and branches reach for the sun they turn orange like fire. Many years ago, after the last Ice Age, my ancestors migrated to Sweden from what is now Scotland. I am the Primary Tree of Scotland's famous Old Caledonian forests.

I do not begin and end at my bark, branches and roots. Instead, I am Living Host for many living others. I am Gas Exchanger and Sunlight Transformer. The children of my companionship with the world are all around me. We are connected underground through our roots and our partners, the mycorrhizal fungi. We Scots pine are Sun Lovers. Our cones open in the sun, spill seeds and grow. We live here with the soil and air and light. We share the minerals and water and bring life to this Northern Forest.

As part of Northern Forest, I live here in Sweden, close to what you call the Arctic Circle, on the slope of this hill beside the Bend in the River Enan (Enafors, you call the village) at the foot of Stornasen Mountain. A couple hundred years ago, settlers built a sawmill at Enafors and that sawmill meant ruin for my people. You needed my people for many reasons, especially charcoal, and for bracing tunnels in your mines. You call us Pioneer Species because we can grow in disturbed soils. I started my life here on a bare hill after the great harvest of the Old Forests. Only 1% of the Old Forest still lives. I have survived over 200 winters. This is my home.

Hi, You Might Call Me Otonabee Scots Pine

You could also call me Orange-Top Tree. Scaly Bark and Medicine Tree, no other pine trees are like me! Yeah, sure, we all have two needles. But I'm different in so many ways. I am Scotland's National Tree! In Scotland they called me one of the Seven Nobles of the Wood. Here I am River Watcher, Soil Stabilizer and Riverbank Colonizer. This sunny meadow is the perfect home for me and my growing family, Sun Loving, Pioneer Species Me.

You humans brought my ancestors to North America in the 1900s to stop agricultural erosion. In the 50s people were crazy for Scots pine Christmas trees. My ancestors were the go-to plantation Christmas tree, destined to be cut before they turned 10. You know what saved me? You guys decided we were Not-Cool-Christmas-Tree. In about ten years everyone wanted spruce trees at Christmas instead. So, I escaped. I am Living Escapee. All my plantation Scots pine neighbours lived to grow and spread everywhere. Now you call me Invasive Species. Now, come on, is

that fair? I didn't used to live here but now I do and *you humans* brought me here. This is my home.

Classroom Realities

We are in the schoolyard. Pointing, the students say, "IT's the tree over there". As educators, we might ask, "What tree? Describe IT'. One student might say, "IT's an evergreen tree." As teachers we might encourage closer observation and comparison, asking students to compare IT with other trees. Students, observing more closely, might determine that IT is a pine. Observing further we might discover that IT is a particular kind of conifer, a Scots pine. Even if we get this far with students, here, it likely ends. We have named our specimen, named "IT" as one of the species Scotch pine or Pinus sylvestris.

Teaching for Wildness: Towards Wild Pedagogies

Where is the "wild" in species categorization? Where is the wild in this pedagogy? We have categorized IT as an object, and given IT a generalized species name, just as we might categorize another person as Homo sapiens. However, we would not stop at a categorization of Homo sapiens when coming to know another human being. So, let's not stop there with a tree!

To "wild" our pedagogies, we need to help students to know Old One Scotch Pine as a living, breathing entity with a story and a history that exists in relationship to us and to a host of living others. To "wild" ourselves, we need to arrive at awareness that we are trying to know the unknowable. We need to arrive at wonder and awe about our particular Scots pine. We need to develop relationship, finding how we are similar and how we are different from IT. When we come to know and then to fill in with our imaginations the things we do not know about Old Scots Pine's story, we begin to inspire empathy with another being.

Building Empathetic Understanding Through Role Play

In interhuman situations, when we are trying to develop empathy and understanding of the human "other", teachers often use the pedagogical strategy of role play. Role play, for example, is frequently invoked in the dramatization of bully/victim/bystander or violence intervention scenarios: "Imagine you are …". We then build the story for this role play: "How would you feel if X happened?", or, "Pretend that you have Z background and have just experienced Y". In interhuman situations, role play is used to bridge relationships and to build capacity for empathetic understanding.

Now, in a wilding way, let's use role play to animate the more-than-human to help students develop awareness and empathetic understanding of a more-than-human other. We ask students to "Imagine you are Scots Pine", our IT of this exploration. Speak as IT; speak as our individual Scots pine. Imagine you *are* Scots Pine and introduce yourself to us.

The Problem

Inevitably, after this instruction, students and workshop participants alike experience a deep awareness of disconnect, of "not knowing". Scots Pine does not speak in human languages. How can I give voice to or speak as Scots Pine?

Role Play Story Building Through Naming

As with an interhuman role play, we begin with information seeking. We begin by building a story, a character, a history and a series of events. An initial step in story building relationship with the more-than-human "other" involves close observation. What do I see? What do I hear, smell and feel? What do these observations tell me and what questions do I have?

A second step in guiding students to a role play of the natural world involves bringing awareness to the names we give things. Humans name things. The names we hold or are given describe our relationships with the surrounding world, describe the connections that hold us in relationship with other human beings. None of us holds just one name. For example, I am Mother, Daughter,

Teacher, Citizen, Employee, Friend, and Jane's Neighbour, to give names to only a few of my human connections. The names Microbial Host, Skin Shedder, Oxygen Breather, Bird Watcher, Fungi and Plant Eater and Sea Kayaker equally describe only a few of my vast connections to the broader more-than-human world.

In our wilding pedagogy we ask students to develop more names for IT. As shown in the opening "autobiographical" examples, students develop names based both on observation and information gathering: Fiery Orange Trunk Tree, Old One, Mountain Watcher, Carbon Sequester, Epiphytic Lichen Host, Aggressive Invader or Great Grandfather Tree. The names that students develop should situate IT in the complex web of relationships which connect IT, the subject of inquiry, to the whole environment.

As this naming process develops, many, many questions will arise in the students. Encourage this. Both research and close observation will be needed to explore and answer those questions. Go deep. Who and what is connected to IT? What is the nature of those relationships? What makes IT different from THAT? Following from the naming process, various autobiographical stories of introduction can be generated.

Ultimately, the pedagogical goal of role play involves building awareness of and appreciation for the unknowable IT. Students should arrive at the awareness that our IT, our Scots Pine, has its own separate and important contextualized life that we can only begin to observe and imagine. They come to understand that IT, through a complex web of inter-relationships, is part of the broader ecosystem of which we humans are only one small part.

A Brief Foray into Criticisms

A criticism that can be leveled at any role play is that one cannot possibly know the "other" and, by extension, it is a gross presumption to even try to speak as the "other". The goal of role play, however, is not actual representation of the unknowable "other" but rather development of empathetic imagination and relational connection with the "other".

A second criticism that can be leveled at role play of the human "other" is the bogey of anthropomorphism. Traditionally Western science has cautioned against anthropomorphism as animist thinking, which attributes human characteristics to the more-than-human. However, human beings use animist thinking all the time. We all animate our environments to varying degrees: we see threatening shapes in the shadows at dusk and attribute voice, judgements and opinions about our behaviour to the family dog. Storms "rage", batteries "die", and, more abstractly, death "comes for us". There is a prevalence of such animistic thought patterns in the everyday life of human beings of all ages. Recent research in educational practice actually suggests many potential advantages of the intentional activation of animist thought, in particular for developing empathy. Maybe we should stop fighting the inevitable and explore the potentials and opportunities of intentionally and respectfully evoking animist thinking…?

Conclusion

This article presents a new "wilding" twist on a common pedagogical approach: role play. Rather than role playing human "others", students are role playing a more-than-human "other". This is a learning challenge that involves close observation, thorough information gathering and an activated imagination. I suggest a few steps and approaches here that have helped guide others in this exploration. Play with the process and do not hesitate to contact me about your explorations.

Lee McArthur is working on a PhD at Trent University in interdisciplinary social research with a focus on education for sustainability. She has been an outdoors enthusiast all her life, hiking, canoeing, kayaking, wandering and often just sitting and being in the wilderness.

Wild Pedagogies: A Lesson Plan Guided by Touchstones

By Victor Elderton

Introduction

In a paper pending publication, Jickling and colleagues (2024) write:

> We live in extraordinary times. The Earth is stressed in ways humans have never witnessed and the stories of our times are being written in mass species extinctions, extreme weather events, and accelerating climate change. Each successive report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is more dire than the last. It has become apparent—as if wildfires, hurricanes, droughts, and floods aren't enough—timelines for change are urgent and that climate change will influence our lives dramatically. But the consequences facing our children and grandchildren are likely to be catastrophic (IPCC, 2023). It is also a time of social upheaval—of war, pandemic, protest, polarization, and climate-induced migration. Meanwhile, nature is crying.
>
> We do not even have adequate language to describe the epochal scope of the coming change. Terms such as "Anthropocene" do not adequately capture the scale of Earth's shifting geostory (Latour, 2014). Perhaps it is another human mistake to even think we can fully describe what is happening. The Earth is writing the script and "modern" humans are, for the most part, not listening. One thing is clear, the future is uncertain.
>
> It would be a mistake, too, to think that we humans can control the pending crisis—that we can avert it with more technological innovation. If we are to affect the environmental trajectory it will not be by using the same kind of thinking that created this social and environmental upheaval. We cannot continue to act as we are. So, what might potential responses entail? (p.1)

Given the context in which we live, Jickling and colleagues (2024) also offer this challenge to educators:

> By introducing wild pedagogies, we suspect that we are giving a name to what many educators are already striving to do. Some will be teaching outside of mainstream education. Some will be outdoor leaders, wilderness guides, environmental educators, or interpreters. Others will be involved in social justice issues and work with the homeless, the marginalized, and those with special needs. Still others will be involved in community education projects, cross-cultural settings, or have worked abroad. One thing that often unites such an eclectic group of educators is an enthusiasm for making a difference in the world and an understanding that mainstream education is, at best, incomplete. For many, they also know that transformative experiences do not easily fall within prescribed teachable goals and formal subjects.
>
> Despite curriculum control, testing pressures, and these deeper cultural constructs, many committed teachers do find ways to resist—to create space for what they consider meaningful transformative, even wild, teaching. Without sliding into an unstructured free-for-all, many educators are finding ways to loosen forms of control, to act in solidarity with the marginalized, to bring the voices of the voiceless to students, to push back against the often-implicit anti-environmental orientations of the

> cultures they are immersed in. And they are enacting pedagogies that are less objectively oriented and more co-constructed, less human-expertly known and more epistemologically diffuse, less universal and more place responsive. In short, they are wilding their practices. (p.3)

I have known and collaborated with Bob Jickling for over three decades and as an educator with my primary motivation being pedagogy and applying theoretical ideas as a form of praxis, I have found working with Wild Pedagogies liberating and inspiring, not only for myself but also for the students that I teach. As alluded to by Jickling et al. (2018), Wild Pedagogies is as much a disposition, an educative mindset, as it is an education practice. In my own work, I have been exploring Wild Pedagogies with co-learners through its touchstones, which I find to be worthwhile waypoints along a pathway to better understand our relational co-existence with Earth.

The lesson plan presented here is how I work with Wild Pedagogies. I hope this plan will help provide a guide that folks might use to explore Wild Pedagogies and bring its touchstones into their own practice and, by extension, the learning and understandings of the students they work with.

Location/Place

Personally, I don't think it matters where you choose to explore Wild Pedagogies (WP). Certainly, a place that is considered a natural place, park or other such location might be where you start but I think as most of us don't teach in such settings, then gravitate to places that are easily and daily accessible. Finding the wildness everywhere is what I believe we should be striving for as educators. I also think places with readily available loose parts (natural objects such as stones, leaves and twigs) are highly valuable manipulatives for this lesson plan because learners will be asked to play around with things and experiment with ideas through found objects. I would also suggest exploring a place several times in a year, which allows a holistic approach to Wild Pedagogies and invites place in its multiple personalities to have co-learner existence, which is essential. As mentioned in the introduction, Wild Pedagogies is as much a disposition as anything and to get learning that you hope to bring forth to become tangible requires intention and purpose.

Timing

I would also suggest that your own learner engagement is paramount so experiencing each of the Wild Pedagogies touchstones for yourself is a preparatory imperative. How you will engage a learning group with Wild Pedagogies will be based on your experience and knowledge of the learners. How long you want to spend exploring Wild Pedagogies through its touchstones is totally up to you, but a minimum of one hour to start is where I would begin. What you should plan for is a series of experiences that become linked together over a period of time. In my practice that usually plays out every three weeks over the course of the teaching year (ten months).

Group Size

A learner group of at least 10 is a starting point to help foster a communal learning experience. What you are aiming for is learners working in pairs or small groups not larger than four to promote collaboration and conversation. On the upper limit I wouldn't encourage group sizes of more than 25.

Materials

- Touchstone cards (adapted from Jickling et al., 2024)
- Loose parts, natural objects

Touchstone Cards with Inquiry Questions (Adapted From Jickling et al., 2024)

Touchstone #1: Nature as Co-Teacher Education is richer, for all involved, if the natural world and the many denizens that co-constitute places are actively engaged with, listened to, and taken seriously as part of the educative process. (Crex Crex Collective, 2018).	• How can we invite the natural world to be present as a co-teacher in our practice? To allow other teaching voices to be heard in their own ways? • How have we been able to learn about, with, and from the more-than-human world? • How can we contribute to the flourishing of each other and those other beings that we live amongst? • What do we do that can distance, background, undervalue, or denigrate the natural world?
Touchstone #2: Complexity, the Unknown, and Spontaneity We believe that education is richer for all if there is room left for surprise. If no single teacher or learner can know all about anything, then there always remains the possibility for the unexpected connection to be made, the unplanned event to occur, and for a simple explanation to become more complex (Crex Crex Collective, 2018, p. 84).	• How did we embrace complexity today? Was there room for the unknown, spontaneous, and unexpected to appear, and be taken seriously? • How do we embrace the complexity of knowledge and not reach for easy answers? Did we encounter the incomplete nature of knowledge today? • Did we take risks today in moving away from attempts to control assumed ends? How can we continue that tomorrow?
Touchstone #3: Locating the Wild The wild can be found everywhere, but this recognition and the work of finding the wild is not necessarily easy. The wild can be hidden, made hard to see by cultural tools, by the colonial orientation of those doing the encountering, and, in urban spaces, by concrete itself (Crex Crex Collective, 2018, p. 88).	• How can we enable encounters with wild, self-willed communities in the spaces that students co-inhabit? And how can we ensure these encounters are acknowledged? • How can we recognize human-centered habits, dominating impulses and urges to control and "manage" the natural world around us, and within our curricula? And how can we respond to these tendencies? • How can learners "lean into" difficult encounters with human privilege, alienation, and dominance?

Touchstone #4: Time and Practice Building relationships with the natural world will, like any relationship, take time. Wild Pedagogues also believe that discipline and practice are essential to this process (Crex Crex Collective, 2018, p. 92).	• Can we leave enough time and space for engagement with the nearby natural spaces and more-than-human beings? • How are we, together, able to step out of schools' linear time and work in different ways? And to recognize that some will need more time than others? • Are we able to notice and support learners who are trying out new habits? Are we trying new practices and reflecting on these attempts? • How can we nurture our own immersion in places? And building relationships with these places and the beings encountered? • What opportunities do we have to develop our intuition and other overlooked ways of knowing and understanding?
Touchstone #5: Cultural Change The way many humans currently exist on the planet needs changing, that this change is required at the cultural level, and that education has an important role to play in this project of cultural change. We also believe that education is always a political act, and Wild Pedagogues embrace the role of activists as thoughtfully as they can (Crex Crex Collective, 2018, p. 97).	• Where are old habits limiting possibilities in response to existing curricula and values embedded in my workplace? What would it take to be satisfied with my response? • What are we doing to help develop political agency? Are we offering them realistic tools to imagine alternative futures and support change? • What politics of the natural world have we encountered, and how have we brought them into our learning spaces? • Have we been given opportunities to consider current relationships with places they inhabit and the other beings that live alongside? And did they have the right to change them?

Touchstone #6: Forming Alliances and Building Community We believe that the colonial ethos of resource extraction is not separate from but is yet another shade of the many hierarchies of dominance that exist amongst humans. For this reason, Wild Pedagogues seek alliances and build community with others not only in the environmental world but across all people and groups concerned with justice (Crex Crex Collective, 2018, p. 102).	• Who makes up my communities when I think of doing Wild Pedagogies work? Why? Who is left out, but should be included? Why? • How do we support my communities and how do they support me? How can we foster these same questions in my classrooms or other learning spaces? • How do my various communities make decisions? Who is affected by these decisions? And are those affected part of the decision-making process? • What can we do to bring the natural world more explicitly into community decision making? • How may my communities encourage one another to depart from the status quo? How do we encourage and challenge each other, allow for mistakes, and rebound from setbacks?
Touchstone #7: Learning That Is Loving, Caring and Compassionate Humans are able, if given the opportunity, to develop rich relationships with myriad members of the more-than-human world. And, that these relationships of reciprocal care are part of overcoming the alienation that exists between many humans and the natural world (Jickling & Blenkinsop, 2020, p. 126).	• What did we do today that required us to be sensually present in their learning? To encounter the other, to feel, care, respect, and to notice the more-than-human world? • What have we done to accommodate experiences that exist beyond the capacity of language to fully describe and evaluate? • Even though some learning cannot be measured, it still exists. How can we create a positive space in my evaluation scheme to honour this existence? • Have we considered how to hold space when encountering the range of emotions that appear in response to burgeoning care? What kinds of skills and support can we offer as we act in ways that are at times contrary and potentially threatening to the system in which they live and learn?

Touchstone #8: Expanding the Imagination The ecological world has changed dramatically and public education must change in response. Future teachers can no longer be trained for a system that leaves students ill-prepared to respond to current crises and imaginatively unable to create new responses (Jickling & Blenkinsop, 2020, p. 131).	• What did we do with today that pushed outside our previous experiences and our own imagination? • What new "stuff", experiences, and stories did I add to the mix? And, how are we taking up, working with, and being changed by these diverse cultural tools? • Did we notice proclivity to "not do" the seemingly unusual or limit seeking to do the same? Or did we make a considered attempt to provide space for the unusual to happen?

Strategies

Explore the WP touchstones and inquiry questions yourself, and adapt the inquiry questions in a way that makes most sense for your learning context. The adaptations given are directed towards educators and not students necessarily, unless those students are educators themselves.

With all groups, start by taking a visit to the site(s) you think you want to explore with Wild Pedagogies in mind and give every group a period of free discovery. Usually, 30-45 minutes is a good amount of time. At the end of the free discovery, use questions (BEETLES BFF Questions) in circle sharing:

- What did you notice?
- What are you wondering about?
- What does this remind you of?

Young Learners: With this, start by having students working in pairs or small groups where each week for eight weeks you collectively explore a place through each Touchstone (one per week). As the educator, introduce the concept of the Touchstone and ask learners how they would interpret the Touchstone in accessible language. Then ask learners to build something or find something that embodies the key idea of the Touchstone. As learners probe the idea, the educator asks questions of each child related to the question considerations for that Touchstone. Complete the experience in collaborative conversation where students talk/show what they have learned.

Middle Learners: With this group, start by working as a group with one Touchstone as an exemplar. As the educator, introduce the concept of a Touchstone, ask learners how they would interpret the Touchstone in accessible language. Ask learners how they would build something or find something that embodies the key idea of the Touchstone. As learners probe the idea and build/explore place, ask questions of learners related to the inquiry question considerations for that Touchstone. Once the group has a sense of the expectations and the strategy pattern, introduce a Touchstone each week. Learners in pairs or small groups should develop a presentation for the whole group and the class tours the WP Touchstone Gallery, with a new Touchstone each week for eight weeks total. Each week, complete each Touchstone experience in collaborative conversation where students talk/show what they have learned.

Highschool–Adult Learners: As the educator, introduce the concept of a Touchstone and ask learners how they would interpret the Touchstone in accessible language. With this group, start by having groups working in pairs and small groups (each group with the

same Touchstone). As the educator/facilitator, introduce the concept and ask learners to build or find something that embodies the key idea of the Touchstone. As learners probe the idea and build/explore place considering WP Touchstone, have them consider the questions related to the Touchstone. Once the group has a sense of the expectations and the strategy pattern, let groups work their way through each Touchstone, choosing a different Touchstone each time so that everyone has explored each Touchstone.

Assessment

As each individual and group shares their insights into the touchstones, a collective understanding or ecology of understanding begins to emerge. In this way, Wild Pedagogies Touchstone experiences can be used as formative assessment. Through experience with the Wild Pedagogies touchstones as an active learning process, educators can link presentation sharings with learning outcomes that are requirements in respective educational jurisdictions.

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Two Wild Pedagogies Gatherings in Greece: How It All Started, and How It Will Continue

By Zoe Theodosaki, Alexandros Georgopoulos & Antonis Breskas

This article narrates the course of a Wild Pedagogies (WP) initiative in Greece to this day, together with an overall assessment based on the authors' impressions and the participants' written documentation. Two colloquia (gatherings) that were held in Greece over two successive years are presented, compared and contrasted. An attempt to discover the causes that rendered them such different and unique experiences (making them all the wilder), even though the initial aims were identical. We hope that this documentation will serve those who wish to hold similar events.

Wild Pedagogies Greece: The Birth and Evolution of the Movement

Below is an unfolding (in chronological order) of the chain of events, meetings and people that produced and developed the Wild Pedagogies Greece initiative. They will be presented as episodes in a timeline:

Episode 1 (winter-spring 2020): One author of this article (Zoe), under the mentorship of the second author (Alekos) and while researching for her master's thesis came across the Wild Pedagogies publications (Jickling et al., 2018; Morse et al., 2018; Quay & Jensen, 2018). Zoe was amazed at the uniqueness and non-formality of the meetings, the ideas shared, the differentiated language used and the inclusion of the more-than-human in conversations, as something refreshing among other academic papers. She contacted one of the authors (Bob Jickling) to express her admiration, and received strong encouragement to hold a local event, as well as additional support and mentorship for her thesis work.

Episode 2 (early summer 2021): Zoe finds herself as part of a training-empowerment circle of educators in the field of sustainability education (facilitated by Alekos). During a workshop on planning future actions, she is given space to present the Wild Pedagogies touchstones and proposes holding a "colloquium" in the summer. The group responds enthusiastically: "Where have you been all these years!", was the reaction of one teacher. The group self-organizes at amazing speed: date and location are agreed, a Facebook event is created to invite people, together with an application form. A number of people express interest and the event is officially scheduled. The invitation text contains the basic WP touchstones as ideas to process, but also encourages applicants to bring along "wild" practices to share, i.e. activities that they implement in their work which they feel somehow relate to the touchstones and WP theory.

Episode 3 (August 2021): The first WP meeting in Greece takes place in the form of a free camp at a forest in the Drama region of northeast Greece, at an altitude of 700 metres in primarily oak forest, next to a stream called "Bear's Stream". The weather is warm and sunny. There is no phone reception in the area, eliminating communication with the rest of the world. Seventeen participants including the team of organizers gather for six days. A cook is hired to oversee meals that are prepared with the help of everyone. Extra caution is taken since the meeting is taking place during a serious government ban on forest activity (!), asking citizens to keep away from forested areas as a fire-protective measure[1]. The participants are primarily teachers of various levels (early, primary, secondary, vocational) and subjects (music, biology, engineering, language) and include one university professor, one agronomist and our cook[2]. Nothing is scheduled. The ideas for workshops that the invitation urged participants to bring along are communicated in the introductory circle: "who am I and what do I bring with me". Sharing an activity is by no means obligatory and the meeting climate is so

friendly and informal that people feel comfortable to express wishes, offers and needs. Perhaps the people present did not constitute a random sample, but rather educators experienced in the spontaneous and self-directed processes. Thus, offers are put down on a makeshift timetable on paper; however, the need expressed among participants is to act differently from the default and respect the rhythm of the place as well as our internal urges and spontaneity, rather than be tied to a schedule. Hence, the timetable is ceremoniously burnt in the fire.

"The 'common' schedule that was drafted was transformed into a flexible process and finally did not become a pain in the neck" (Alekos).

We decide to proceed with the spontaneous offers of the day and let ourselves be carried away by a flow that the forest dictates rather than try to put events in our own, clock-measured time (Jickling et al., 2018, p. 94). The group is left to organize itself. Every morning, in the round-the-fire plenary, the needs and offers of the day are expressed and participation is optional. Surprisingly, all proposed workshops happen with no exception and participation included almost everyone! Workshops offered included: (a) attuning to the sounds of the earth, or sonic meditations (Oliveros, 1974; McClellan, 1997); (b) introduction to permaculture design (Mollison & Slay, 2016; Morrow, 2014); (c) deep nature connection (Young et al., 2010) and (naked) forest bathing; (d) the council of all beings (Macy & Brown, 2014); (e) guided meditation (Kabat-Zinn, 2013); and (g) handcraft. There is also time for games, self-care and group-care circles, spontaneous night walks and howling, etc.

"It was magical how totally different people attuned so fast and acted and communicated harmoniously, as if they knew each other for years" (Tatiana). "It was a big dive into an 'unknown/known world'" (Konstantina),

Over the course of those activities, some participants became deeply touched (to the point of bursting into tears) because (according to their writings) the group dynamics stir in them long-held/hidden emotional loads and, more importantly, they feel the atmosphere of the meeting is "permissive" enough to provide time and space for their emotions to be expressed. The accepting climate is a deliberate way of facilitation in agreement with the Rogerian "unconditional positive regard" principle, along with congruence and empathy on the part of the facilitators (Rogers, 1961; Rogers, 1980).

During the closing evaluation session, participants are also asked to dream and plan future actions. The group dreams: to further disseminate, compose a manifesto, organize a longer summer gathering the next year, to network, and more:

"Create a forum for discussion and exchange of material and experiences of participants, of their attempts to implement WP in class […] this way begin to somewhat heal the feeling of loneliness and futility that we may be experiencing" (Natassa).

"Our disposition is not to stop at this gathering; to continue disseminating and communicating the WP touchstones through school, social media, etc." (Konstantina).

"We can and want to do it every year, an institution, the colloquium (2nd, 3rd) with other groups and this same group or part of it, as 'yeast' for every new group" (Antronia).

One important desire expressed is to regularly meet in person during the year in order to mutually empower and inspire, and thus alleviate the "pedagogical loneliness" that was expressed. And so it happens…

Episode 4 (January 2022): 12 out of 17 of the summer WP crew meet again in January in a guesthouse over a weekend. A Dragon Dreaming session[3] is held, to renew our vision and proceed to more concrete planning. A logo is inspired (and subsequently implemented); the need to create a manifesto is reiterated. Time is

allotted of course to outdoor wanders and games for group bonding and fun, after the motto "if it's not fun, it's not sustainable" (J, Croft, DD trainer, oral communication). This meeting provides the circumstance to get better acquainted and bond deeper in a not-so-wild context.

Episode 5 (March 2022): 10-12 of us meet in a mountain cabin. There, among rolling in the snow and experimenting with the limitations of our bodies in the cold, the manifesto of the Greek Wild Pedagogues is composed, in a wonderful team process. Also, the next colloquium is envisioned and begins to take form. The idea is to "invite a friend" and double our number, having expressed the need to maintain the safe space feeling we had achieved among our group. In the coming months, the next meeting is advertised on social media, a new location is researched, and preparations are made.

Episode 6 (August 2022): The second WP gathering in Greece is held in August 2022 as a free camp on Mount Voras (Kaimaktsalan bordering North Macedonia) at an altitude of 1800 metres, inside a lush, ancient beech forest, next to a spring (but no stream to bathe nearby). There are 27 participants (10 from the old group and 17 newcomers) and there is no cook to oversee meals (this occurs more through a misunderstanding than intentionally), and so meals are to be a group responsibility. Again, participants are asked to bring along "wild" practices and thoughts to share. For those of us present in the first one, there are expectations based on our prior experience, which to a great extent are disillusioned.

During the introductory circle, participants propose what they would like to share, and there is an attempt to create a schedule/non-schedule of events. The proposals include: sensory connection to nature; storytelling workshop; mandala crafting; introduction to agile learning methodology; dancing; meditation; creative writing; yoga sessions. However, the unexpected weather conditions create constant adjustments and cancellations to whatever program we try to create. Thunderstorms, heavy rainfall and strong winds constitute most of the week's weather. As a consequence, our priorities turn to chores that have to do with surviving the weather, leaving the "schedule" aside. We often need to dig ditches to divert water overflows, we are obliged to repair a damaged dirt road (our only connection to the nearest supplies), we need to restore the tarp (our only protection from rain) that is carried away by strong wind. All these physically demanding chores, together with the constant need for wood supply, the cooking and the maintenance, leave little time for the activities proposed. The hike to the nearby mountaintop is forever postponed due to thunderstorms that are constantly expected, and/or happening. Sensory nature-connection exercises are not easy when everything around is wet and people's bodies feel uncomfortable (Greeks are not so used to rain, after all).

The camp is put down on the fifth day, after we receive an alert from the Civil Protection Service for immediate evacuation, anticipating extreme weather phenomena in the area. The last three days are hosted in a big garden of a village house in the plains, where we reflect upon the experience, self-care, group-care, and close the meeting with future planning. Some people feel relieved, but some feel somewhat disappointed because their expectations about "deep connection with the Earth" were not realized.

"To me, returning to Panteli's house (with whatever good that brought to the group) perhaps impeded my peak experience that I decided I wanted to have that afternoon" (Antonia).

The planning brainstorm does not yield much, and, even though the group expresses again the wish to meet throughout the year, this never happens, nor does another gathering so far.

Compare and Contrast: Discussion

In the following paragraphs we try to point out some critical and antithetical pairs of issues characterizing both gatherings. By highlighting similarities and differences

between the first and second gatherings, we aim to draw some realizations and learnings that might be helpful guides as to the organization of future, similar events.

Co-Creation or Pre-Constructed Schedule?

In both gatherings, special emphasis was put on co-creation. From schedule to camp rules, nothing was taken for granted, but was rather put to group negotiation and consensus. The aim was to create emancipatory group bonding and practice democracy.

The first gathering surprised us with its easy, intuitive flow and spontaneity: fast and natural group bonding, program flow without a written program, setting common rules without articulating much, timely offers that succeeded one another naturally: "The community self-regulated without rules, with spontaneous and non-imposed contribution to the works" (Antonia).

The second gathering demanded a significant amount of time for negotiation and renegotiation of rules, scheduling and creating common ground, perhaps due to the increased number of people. The original participants anticipated that things would flow with the same magical ease and were somewhat disappointed in that regard. While it was a conscious move on the part of the first gathering's participants to step back in order to provide space to the newcomers, later on they seemed to have second thoughts about that. They realized they had miscalculated the second gathering newcomers' vivacity, who dominated space and time, to the distress of the "olds". Unfortunately, there wasn't enough time to elaborate and heal those diverging attitudes and behaviours. However, any disappointments that occurred became learnings and useful observations. One thing that we possibly learned was that we need more careful organization of similar events as far as the selection of people and the number of them, together with certain pre-existing ground rules, to save time.

"We would immerse ourselves in 'analysis-paralysis', which I didn't enjoy, but could not prevent either. Then, time became linear and inhumanely human. Observing and practicing–now that I take distance from it–acceptance of the 'schedule' that was lost in the rain" (Anthi, "old"[4]).

However, for the "newcomers" that did not have this prior experience, this co-creation was positive.

"The non-imposed schedule as well as the embrace of the unexpected gave space to my own intuition and experiential understanding" (Margarita, "new").

Nature Connection Versus Political Activism

During the second summer gathering, there appeared to be a divergence in the level of communication, which is probably due to different agendas. While the existing group anticipated the intuitively flowing and all-connecting atmosphere we had experienced during the 2021 meeting, the newcomers were strongly attracted to the more "political" elements in the touchstones, and therefore strongly insisted on clarifying and structuring to be democratic and inclusive. One can say that the level of communication remained–to an extent–in the mental-intellectual rather than reach-heart level.

Compare the following two passages:

"Deep connection, difficult connection, beneficial connection. It is rare and magic that the trees speak to you, when you address them, and they respond to you (this is probably the point where logic stood back and intuition took over). And if they don't want to speak to you, you should respect them and be quiet, if they don't want you to hug them or to sit under their shadow, you should respect them and go away. How natural and fair this attitude reads into the microcosm we established and how funny it appears into the external (out of the group) life? Our connection, communication, gratitude towards the elements, contrary to the anthropocentric culture of utilitarians which permeates my life outside this group" (Niki, first gathering).

"The fact that so many people met and lived together in nature, having as common need a different school is of course a deep

political act. It is a lived proposal as to how we envision a school" (Anna, "new", second gathering).

Deep Time or Clock Time?

The first gathering nearly unanimously satisfied the deep time touchstone (Jickling et al., 2018). There were multiple opportunities for solo wanders, connecting to beings, sit spots, meditation, earth listening–experiences that go beyond the analytical mind.

The second gathering unfolded more according to clock time, due to a lack of a cook, harsh weather conditions that required practical chores as well as the larger number of people that took time to express themselves, propose, negotiate, etc. However, it might also have been that each of the newcomers, being more of a "political activist" rather than a "deep-nature-connection" person, needed more time in order either to acculturate themselves into the "olds" way of life, or for an osmosis of both sets of ideas/behaviors to be able to happen. In any case, even though grassroots democracy is an appealing thought, perhaps for the short period of a week, having basic structure and rules and not leaving everything open for negotiation, could have had a different impact as to how time was shared among activities.

"Two factors were inhibiting this process. The big number of group members (every circle took too much time) and harsh weather conditions that often demanded survival moves and group reorganization" (Antonia, "old").

"I missed this quality time (not the clock one, the 'other') where I had the luxury to not do anything and sit and look without seeing, hear without listening, touch unconsciously, lose myself in existence, enter deeper layers of my being" (Alekos, "old").

The Weather Parameter: Group Bonding, Nature Connection and Community Creation Versus Survival Mode

Both gatherings took place in August and in forest settings. However, the mild climate of the first location as in contrast to the quite unusual and unexpected stormy weather of the second, seriously affected the daily flow, as described above in detail. Most of the time was allotted to surviving. Some participants feel that this impeded the goals for nature-connection and community creation–this was felt mostly by second-time participants, compared with their previous experience. For some of us, that was a teaching:

"Nature became a teacher. She was obviously pulling the strings of the gathering. We followed Mother Earth, lived in her. She guided us" (Anna).

"I had to overcome my comfort zone, and I learnt that my aim was not to overcome my limits in order to experience nature in all her greatness and feel part of her, I can feel part of nature in better conditions, and learn from this teacher what she has to offer me […] I felt we didn't respect nature's wildness, didn't take her into account, instead of feeling humility, we were arrogant towards her, this is our training…I think we learnt our lesson" (Sissy).

Learnings

In the section below, we attempt to expose deeper second thoughts concerning some nodal/structural issues, common denominators penetrating both gatherings that had an educational value for us all. How much organizational structure is optimal? How much wildness can a human being tolerate? Leaving our civilization behind and immersing ourselves into the wilderness might be an experience of significant importance. We have work to do in order to synthesize "political activism" and "nature connection."

The decision not to create any structured schedule and instead allow it to be co-created by the group of participants, in retrospect, perhaps needs to be reconsidered. According to participants' assessment, some structure as to the basic, practical things could have been announced, rather than negotiated, to save time and

energy. However, the true building of non-hierarchical communities requires non-imposition and consensus.

"I felt that some of us felt things move slowly, due to many conversations. I wonder, though, if things might indeed have moved fast, if we consider as 'things' not the structured activities but the interaction, the acquaintance, the acceptance and the evolution towards one new body" (Margarita, second gathering).

The choice of wilderness sites serves the purpose of learning from immersing into deep conversation with the more-than-human. However, it should (have) be(en) acknowledged that each individual's outdoor experience (consequently, their comfort zone) is different, and moving too far from it in some cases can cause them to enter the panic zone, as was admitted by certain participants in the second gathering. Therefore, wild places are preferable, but sometimes not TOO wild can offer more benefits to this purpose.

"Moving up to the mountain, I realized my pulse started rising, my soul fluttered, I felt hard to breathe. It resembled a panic attack as it has been described to me. I think from that moment on started the journey out of my comfort zone. The journey to learning through a small panic (Konstantina, "old", second gathering).

Being subject to extreme weather conditions without proper shelter was a big experience. It awakened in some participants, like the author (Zoe), a sense of humility, of being too small and too fragile. This is a true re-negotiation of human's place in the bigger system and can only be experienced when one leaves behind the safety of the civilization we have developed. As most participants admitted, in retrospect, this has been a rewarding experience*:*

"How beautiful all this we experienced…We didn't do bad. We managed a lot in very few days" (Despoina).

"I feel proud of everything we achieved" (Alekos).

There is definitely a need to discover ways and ideas to confront and heal the dichotomy that emerged between the "nature connection" versus "political activism". Those components are both strong and in reality are intertwined. When synthesized they can yield a robust outcome.

The Way Forward

The networking among participants in both colloquia, together with a social media page, is to a certain extent yielding fruit. Wild Pedagogies as a term is increasingly mentioned in educational contexts and arouses interest to learn more. There is an immediate need to translate basic ideas to share in Greek teaching communities and this will be materialized promptly. The next gathering is already being dreamt about and planned, in a more international context. We are thankful to be part of this community, and hope to contribute to this Great Turning (Macy and Brown, 2014)

Notes

[1] The ban was a temporary measure that was announced shortly before our gathering as a government response to fire outbreaks, and we very consciously decided to implement civil disobedience, having full responsibility of ourselves and our actions against a measure that we did not consider either effective or well designed.

[2] It is noteworthy and also touching to mention the fact that the cook, at the end of the meeting, refused to get paid for her

services, claiming in tears that her gain from being part of the experience was so great that she did not want to "taint it with money".

[3] Dragon Dreaming is a methodology to support sustainable project development. It has been designed by anthropologist John Croft, inspired by and after studying the communal project plannings and decision makings of the Aboriginal peoples. It involves circular or spiral rather than linear processes and respects the bodily and intuitive knowledge equally to the logical-analytical mind. For more info: https://dragondreaming.org/

[4] From this point onwards, it is important to differentiate between second-time participants ("old") and newcomers ("new"), to make our point.

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Alexandros D. Georgopoulos is professor emeritus at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Department of Preschool Education. He has authored articles and books on Human Ecology, Environmental Ethics and Environmental Education. He is currently working to combine the Rogerian encounter groups with the experiential teaching of sustainability.

Antonis Breskas has a degree in agriculture and post-graduate studies in environmental science. He is currently being trained as a mountain guide. His aim is to combine environmental education with outdoor activities such as hiking, climbing and nature immersion.

Grow or Show: Social Media and the Real World

By Bob Henderson

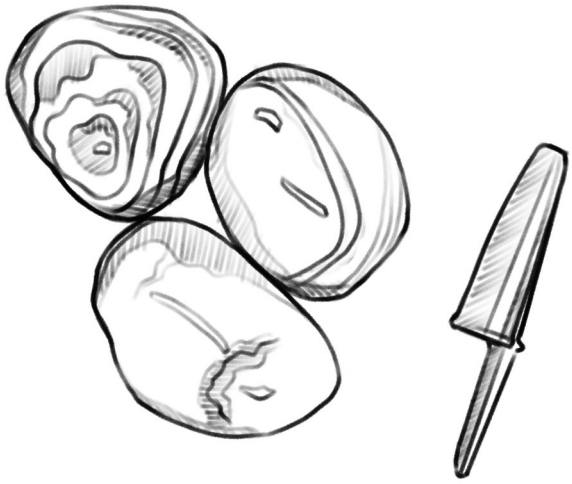
"Twenty years ago, the internet was an escape from the REAL WORLD [own emphasis added]," says Tristan Kim, a thoughtful 16-year-old at Sacred Heart High in Walkerton, Ontario. "But, now today the real world is more of an escape from the internet."

I saw this articulate gem from Kim in a *Toronto Star* article (September 2, 2023) while using the newspaper as a fire starter. It left me feeling a bit off-kilter. I have decided to link together two other off-kilter moments to write about social media and outdoor outings in the real world...sort of. I am asking questions more than providing answers. I hope they comprise some of the right questions.

Off-Kilter #1

Watching from above, I noticed two male hikers ascending a hiking trail above a tree line in the Rockies. Suddenly, they stopped and removed their shirts, picked up sizable rocks and started performing arm curls. I was curious but missed some of what followed.

They continued to climb and soon reached my resting place. Their warmer layers were back on. I asked what the arm curls were all about, not commenting that it seemed to me much too cold for a shirtless moment. They happily shared with me, almost as if I should have known, that they were pumping up bicep muscles "for a quick selfie shot for social media" and, they added, "to impress the girlfriends." They continued up, and I continued down, but a lot had changed. It was an off-kilter moment that I won't soon forget.



I wonder now; what is the real world? I guess the real world was not good enough. Harmless though, right? I am not sure about that. I'll leave it as a good question.

Off-Kilter #2

This is not my own reporting, but rather a news item that I pulled from the Jasper, Alberta local paper, *The Fitzhugh* (March 14, 2024). The headline reads: "Forensics Show Banff Cougar Attack Didn't Happen."

Parks Canada completed an investigation into the February 12th, 2024 report of a cougar attack at the Rockbound Lake area. Officials say no cougar DNA was found on the samples that were collected for testing and no evidence of a cougar, such as tracks, were detected anywhere in the vicinity of the reported attack.
The key takeaway (a better headline) from an outdoor educator's perspective should be: "Fake Cougar Attack Goes All Over the Media: Cougar and Hikers Demand Real World." I will keep it to the essentials from the March 14th reporting:

"Parks Canada's investigation is now closed." The area closure was quietly lifted on February 21st, 2024. Spencer Weilermann, a twenty-three-year-old who was on a solo day trip along the Rockbound Lake trailhead on February 12th reported he had been attacked by a cougar and gave a series of interviews to various media outlets. Photos showed he had scratches on his face, which were

reportedly not consistent with a cougar attack. Local wildlife advocate, John Marriott, said he was frustrated that Parks Canada management didn't allow staff to comment on this alleged cougar attack immediately. Marriot states, "In a case like this where it involves a much maligned and misunderstood apex predator that many people are already scared of, it's inexcusable."

Cougar attacks are extremely rare. There has only been one fatal cougar attack in Alberta. Frances Frost was killed by a cougar in January 2001 as she cross country skied near Lake Minnewanka in Banff National Park. By not addressing the issue sooner, based on initial findings at the scene, Marriott said this incident has fuelled fear in people across North America as the story went viral. "The truth is that cougar attacks are extremely rare; you're more likely to be killed by having a vending machine fall on you than from a cougar attack," he states.

Okay, so it didn't happen, but the goal was achieved, at least initially. The interviews must have been interesting, and it was one heck of a viral social media post. Attention currency achieved! Selfie culture wins the day.

Both these stories share something in common. They both reflect a non-connected, or at least, misguided connection to nature and body, or at least, a twisted one. As for the cougar and other "apex predators," David Abram's (1996) notion that we think of our fellow creatures as "the-more-than-human-world," might be shifting to acknowledging them as "targets" of "the-worst-of-human-world."

Author and mountaineer Chris Brinnlee Jr. (2023) speaks to this attention currency. Like Tristan Kim, he articulates a powerful idea: "People stopped going outside to grow; instead, they went outside to show." And if people are lucky, a showy shirtless selfie or a more nefarious "show" will go viral. There is no harm in the first story; who cares if a couple of lads wanted to show off? There is harm in the fake cougar attack for cougars, the thousands of hikers denied that area for recreation at that time, and perhaps millions of folks who only saw the hyped-up attack news item from young Weilermann. The heart of this story is the nasty consequence of people now being fearful of nature or, worse, not going out into this "real world" for fear of apex predator attacks.

Common to both stories is the fact that the real world wasn't good enough as it is. How would Tristan Kim respond to these stories, one wonders? Author Chris Brinlee Jr.'s "grow or show" distinction for outdoor educators has real teeth. Now add Tristan's insight; they don't go outside at all, to grow or show. Here is a passage from Brinlee Jr.:

> Then a new coin came onto the market: Attention Currency. An algorithm was introduced to peddle it. Everything changed, seemingly overnight. The new order dictated that specific types of catchy "content" be produced. People stopped going outside to grow; instead, they went out to show. Banger Factories were born. Their formula, simple: Take a short walk to a pretty place that looks remote. Wait for the right light. Snap a photo. Leave. The next person waiting in line regurgitates it, like when one dog eats another's vomit.

It is appreciated that his regurgitating reference is at the harsh, more extreme end of the continuum of "grow or show". I do think of it as a continuum (grow to show/show to grow), not as a binary

(grow or show). I wonder, can you both grow and show? I also wonder, how much "show" attention currency needs to be the focus before the grow factor is unrelated? Again, can you grow and show at the same time? I cannot help feeling that too much show—let the examples here represent too much show—is harmful, hence that off-kilter feeling. I fear one hampers the other: lots of grow/not much show and lots of show/not much grow.

Back to Kim's real world now becoming a mere escape from the pervasive force of the internet, one is left to wonder, if even in the "real world escape" the show factor is not becoming a pervasive force. These stories suggest so by a little and a lot.

Outdoor educators, one may suggest, have a certain responsibility to the real world and to our students' self-realization to joyously dwell well learning within this real world. You could say, we are in the grow business, not the show business. We are trying to keep folks grounded in the real world. But that said, we live in a time when it is best to see the internet/real world and show/grow as a continuum not a binary. A little show can't hurt. I wonder if a lot of show can hurt the self (the psyche) and others, including cougars? On the continuum, there will be many off-kilter overshow moments ahead for outdoor education. They should demand our attention.

References

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Brinlee Jr., C. (2023). Becoming a mountain mage: The formidable path towards transcendence. *Mountain Gazette*, 1990, 72-85.

Bob Henderson is a long-time COEO ambassador for Pathways, *starting as a committee member for the journal's creation in 1988. Currently Bob serves as the* Pathways *resource editor.*

Wild Pedagogies International Colloquium: "Wild Imaginaries"

The upcoming Wild Pedagogies International Colloquium is scheduled to take place from August 25th to 31st in the Tzoumerka Mountains of Greece.

The Evolution of Wild Pedagogies

As of 2025, we are celebrating 10 years of Wild Pedagogies initiatives and inspiration. Back in 2014, a group of committed educators gathered in a floating colloquium down Dawson River in Yukon, Canada, under the theme "Wild Pedagogies" to explore how education could become more "wild", meaning self-willed, undomesticated, and challenging control, and aiming to creating a future, more sustainable culture, rather than re-creating the existing, dominant western culture that threatens life on Earth.

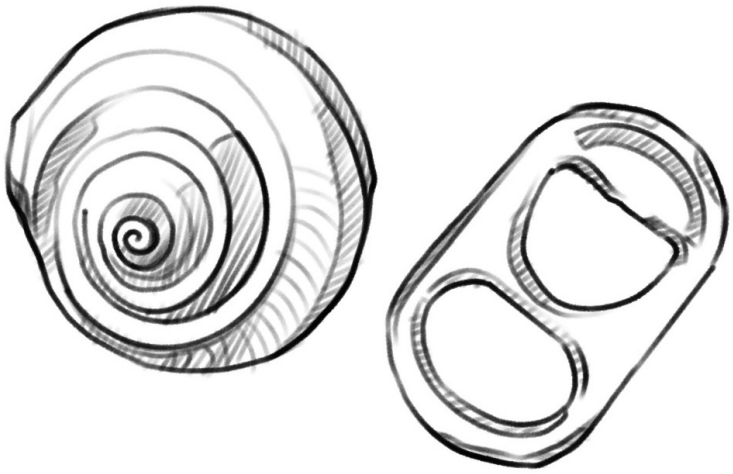
In the present, we carry forward the original aim "to challenge dominant cultural ideas about control—of each other, of nature, of education, and of learning" and invite you to gather again, under the inspiring theme of "Wild Imaginaries", to further explore how to expand our imagination and channel its transformative power to tackle the above-mentioned challenges. Also, we aim to explore how to productively network and build alliances, and actively imagine Wild Pedagogies going into the next decade.

What You Should Expect

A colloquium is, in itself, a challenge to the customary norms of conferences. Rather than having structured and formalized presentations, a colloquium is more conversational. It is a place where people come to learn by listening carefully, responding with an open mind and understanding in good faith. And our conversations will be responsive to contributions of the place and by our more-than-human partners. The venue will allow us to sit in circle in open air, as has always been the way of true communities.

Venue & Accommodation

The Mountain Refuge of Melissourgoi will serve as our meeting ground, providing an idyllic backdrop for profound discussions and reflections.



Other Expenses

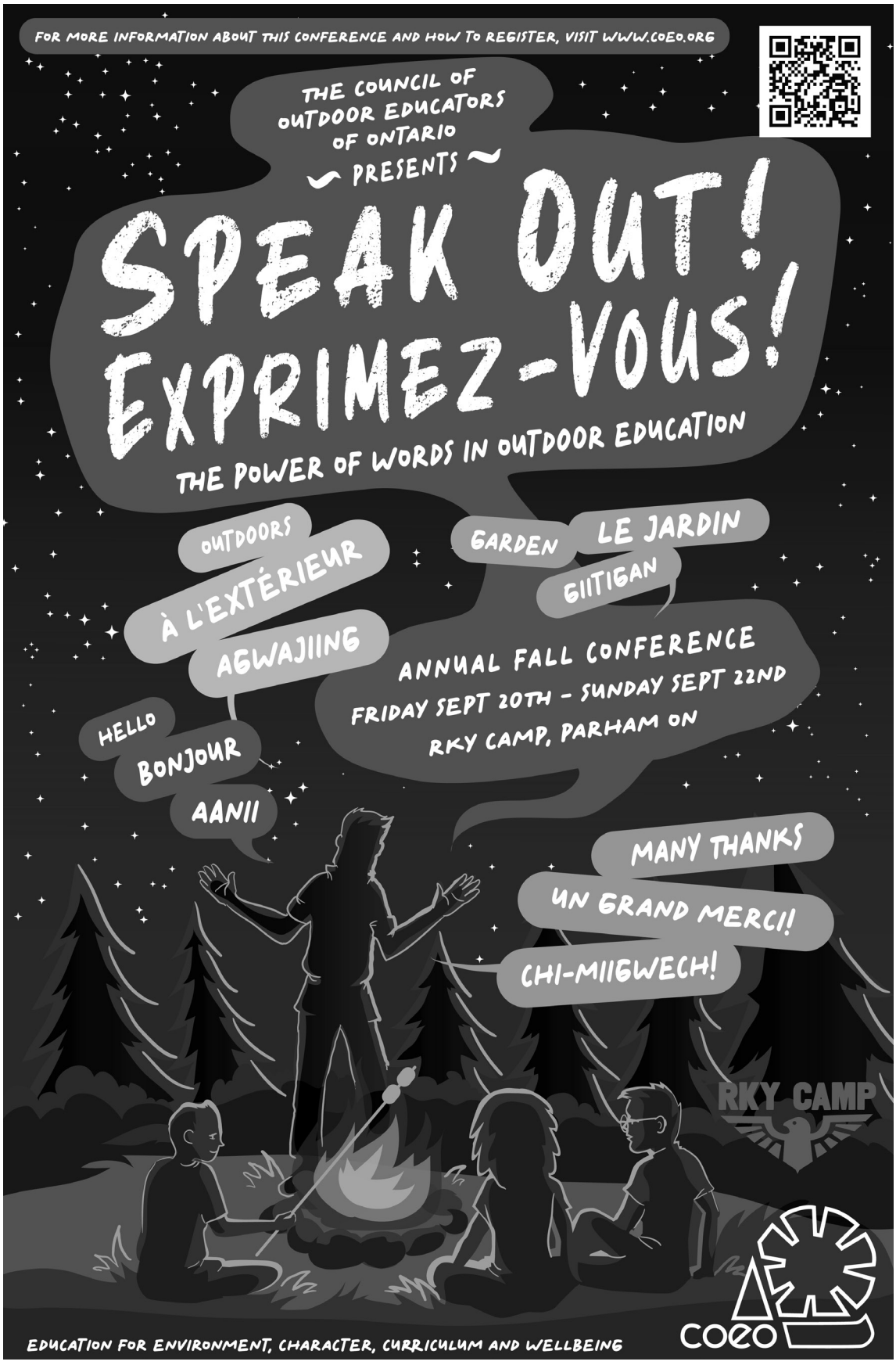
The colloquium organization and facilitation is voluntary on behalf of the Wild Pedagogies Greece team. The only costs that participants are expected to cover are their travel and accommodation.

Contact

For information, clarification or anything you wish to ask, you may contact us at wildpedagogiesgreece@gmail.com.

Wild regards,

The Wild Pedagogies Greece team represented by Zoe Theodosaki, Angelos Konstantinidis, Lina Domouchtsidou, and in consultation with past Wild Pedagogies organizers Bob Jickling, Sean Blenkinsop, Michael Paulsen and Linda Wilhelmsson.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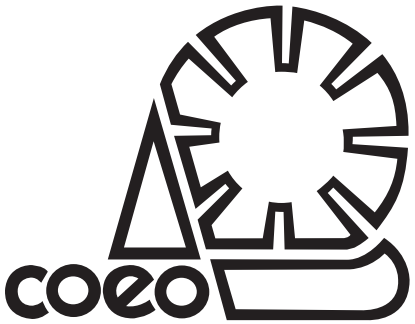

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